

Mission as God's Spiral of Renewal



Kenneth R. Ross

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Kenneth R. Ross

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“At once creative, pastoral, and prophetic, this book confirms Ken Ross’s distinguished reputation as a major mission thinker. His gripping essays range across such subjects as mission theology and practices of partnership, Scottish legacies in mission, and the Malawian church’s role in democratization. This book brings the past into the present, and points toward the future of mission. I recommend it very highly.”

Dana L. Robert

Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Mission
Director, Center for Global Christianity and Mission, Boston University

“A splendid book, full of good things, and with much of importance to say on the Christian past and present, in relation both to Africa and to Scotland.”

Andrew F. Walls,

University of Edinburgh, Liverpool Hope University,
Akrofi-Christaller Institute, Ghana

“In this rich collection, veteran missionary, churchman, and ecumenist Ken Ross brings together his warm humanity and gentle wisdom to shed new light and challenge to thinking about and engaging in mission. This is a harvest of two decades of reflection and service, and a tribute to both the Scottish missionary spirit and the African church.”

Steve Bevans, SVD

Louis J. Luzbetak, SVD Professor of Mission and Culture, Emeritus
Catholic Theological Union, Chicago

“A wealth of experience in Malawi, Scotland and on international mission and ecumenical bodies make this collection of essays by Ken Ross a perceptive contribution to reflection on contemporary Christian mission. Local and global concerns are deftly interwoven throughout the book.”

Dr Emma Wild-Wood

Senior Lecturer in African Christianity and African Indigenous Religions,
Centre for the Study of World Christianity, University of Edinburgh

“In this remarkable volume covering diverse subjects, in a span of three decades, Kenneth R. Ross articulates his views on the meaning and practice of Christian mission and challenges the binary view of mission that prevailed before the 1950s. He further reflects on Scotland’s experiences in the world-wide Christian mission and demonstrates the centrality of Africa in any discourse on Christianity. This volume is invaluable in its argument for a rethinking of Christian mission especially in relation to the West, which is now a new frontier for Christian mission. The book will be immensely beneficial to students of missiology and general readers who are interested in the subject of Christian Mission.”

Prof Philomena Njeri Mwaura,
Associate Professor in African Christianity, Kenyatta University, Kenya
President of the International Association for Mission Studies 2004-2008

“In this ‘ragbag’ of essays on Christian Mission, Kenneth R. Ross offers us something that is genuinely missional, contemporary and relevant. We have here in this volume an engagement with some of the core issues with which students and scholars of mission must be engaged, including how secularization, conflict and even Trumpism affects the life and work of the world church today. In short, the work looks simple, but it’s innovative and brilliant!

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu PhD
President, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana.

“This collection of papers and essays by Kenneth Ross, a well-known and prolific missiologist, revolves around mission and evangelism in the 21st century. They engage the contexts of Scotland, Africa and World Christianity in a spiral movement. Each worthwhile reading in its own right, all together demonstrate how mission has become global and yet needs to reflect back into the interacting contexts in order to offer orientation in the many challenges Christian discipleship is facing today. From Edinburgh 1910 to Malawi and to Arusha 2018 and back to Brexit: truly a spiral, which is thrilling to follow!”

Dr Marina Ngursangzeli Behera
Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

To Jooseop Keum
who provokes the missionary imagination
and gives us friends.

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Like many volumes of collected essays this one is a rather loose assembly of essays, lectures and articles that have been presented at different times and places over an extended period of time. There is no close progression from one chapter to the next but they are held together, I hope, by a unifying concern with the meaning and practice of the mission to which Christ calls his followers in today's context. Most of the chapters have previously been published in books and journals. I am therefore deeply grateful to editors and publishers who have given their permission for their republication in this volume.

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I am grateful to Mzuni Press for their initiative in publishing this volume. It has been a particular pleasure that it has allowed me to work once again with my long-time colleague and collaborator Klaus Fiedler with whom I have been working on research and publication projects for almost thirty years. Klaus's generous spirit, meticulous editorial eye and passion for publishing have been immensely fruitful in Malawi and beyond. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to be working with him once again on the preparation of this book. I am also truly grateful for the award of a grant to support the publication from The Drummond Trust, 3 Pitt Terrace, Stirling, Scotland, UK.

Kenneth R. Ross
Netherlorn, Argyll
November 2018

Introduction

This book is the product of thinking, during the first two decades of the 21st century, about the meaning of the mission to which Jesus Christ calls his followers. The particular shape that it takes calls for some biographical explanation. During this period, I have been based in Scotland so Scottish history and context are prominent. Just prior to this period I spent a decade in Malawi, which proved to be highly influential in my theological formation, and Africa has remained with me as a continuous point of reference. At the same time, I have had the privilege of having a worldwide perspective on Christianity – during the first decade of the century as General Secretary for World Mission at the Church of Scotland and during the second as Series Editor of the Edinburgh Companions to Global Christianity. Hence the interplay between Scotland, Africa and the global context shapes the discussion found in these pages.

The first section attempts to make a contribution to the rethinking of Christian mission that has been ongoing for a hundred years or so. The simple binary understanding prevailing at the start of the 20th century saw mission as a matter of the "Christian world" taking the good news of Christ to the "non-Christian world". No sooner had this confident approach been crystallized by the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference than the First World War shattered its illusions. A book about mission that appears in 2019 is informed by one hundred years of rethinking what this endeavour is all about. The need for rethinking was already apparent at the first World Mission Conference to be held after the war, in Jerusalem in 1928. As the century progressed the question only deepened with further heart searching and rethinking being required after the Second World War as the colonial age came to a close. A crucial breakthrough came in the 1950s with the emergence of an understanding that mission is not primarily a human endeavour but rather the mission of God (*missio Dei*). Still, this answer gave rise to many more questions. The latter part of the twentieth century witnessed turmoil, polarisation and division among those concerned with Christ's call to mission. Such was the prevailing situation when I became General Secre-

tary for World Mission at the Church of Scotland in 1998. By that time the centenary of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference was on the horizon – a stimulus and opportunity for the missionary movement to regroup and capture the meaning of mission for our time. Soon after the centenary major constituencies within world Christianity attempted to set out their understanding of the meaning of mission. I was particularly involved in the preparation of the 2012 World Council of Churches *Together Towards Life* mission affirmation. If this inspiring text answered some questions, it raised others. Some of these are addressed in the pages that follow. No attempt is made by this book to offer a comprehensive missiology. Rather it is a collection of fragments that I hope might be of service in shaping a faithful and creative understanding of mission in our time.

The second section of the book offers some reflections on Scotland's experience in worldwide Christian mission. It is evident that, for its size, Scotland played a disproportionate role in the modern missionary movement that reshaped the contours of global Christianity in the 1850-1950 period. A focus on Scotland is therefore not intended to be parochial but rather to open up the dynamics of worldwide Christian mission in such a way as to deepen both our understanding of its history and of its contemporary expression. Particularly in contexts like Malawi where Scottish missionaries have been influential I hope that a broader understanding of the Scottish missionary movement will be valuable.

The third section is concerned with Africa, reflecting both what I have learned from Africans' appropriation of Christian faith and the attempt I have made to journey in solidarity with African Christians meeting the challenges that are set before them. It is apparent today that you cannot understand Christianity without some reference to Africa and nor can you understand Africa without some reference to Christianity. The interplay between the two captured my imagination during my years in Malawi and the essays in this section revolve around this highly creative encounter. The Malawi story is central to this but is complemented by a broader view of continent-wide developments.

The final section is concerned with the direction of the Western world. Having been the "home base" of the modern missionary movement, the West has moved in the course of a century towards the repudiation of the Christianity that was central to society and culture for more than a millennium. No wonder the missionary and ecumenical leader Lesslie Newbigin liked to quote General Simatoupong of Indonesia: "Of course, the number one question is: can the West be converted?"¹ This is a question that has followed me across the past twenty years and the essays in the final section of the book attempt to address it. Wilbert Shenk has written that: "It is in the nature of mission always to seek the frontier where the struggle between faith and unfaith is most clearly and urgently drawn."² In this perspective the Western world today presents a new frontier for Christian mission and the essays in this final section attempt to give some pointers as to how this fresh frontier might be engaged.

The essays collected in this volume are varied. Some seek to stand back from the action in order to identify and analyse significant trends. Others are written "to the moment" – as contextual theology must be – in order to consider, e.g. a political crisis in Malawi in 2002-03, the Make Poverty History campaign of 2005, the centenary of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference, or the publication of the World Council of Churches' *Together Towards Life* in 2012. If anything holds them together it is the suggestion that mission functions as a spiral. It is a thought that I owe to the South African missiologist Willem Saayman who once observed that, "the process and progress from church to mission to church should rather be seen as cyclical, and specifically as an ascending, never-ending spiral. From the very beginning, therefore, the progress is not in a straight line *away* from the 'sending' church to some far-away unreached 'mission field', but rather curving back to it throughout."³ An immediate application of this thought is to consider how the growth and expansion

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Mission*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, p. 66.

² Wilbert Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, New York: Orbis, 1999, p. 183.

³ Willem Saayman, "'Missionary by its Very Nature'. A Time to Take Stock," *Missionalia*, Vol. 28/1 (April 2000), pp. 19-20.

of Christianity in the southern hemisphere might bear on the challenges presented to mission by secularizing Western Europe. As David Smith has pointed out: "It should be possible for churches possessing two centuries of accumulated experience and expertise in cross-cultural missionary endeavour to discover faithful and creative ways of ensuring that Christ becomes a living option for a generation shaped by postmodern culture."⁴ The question of how this possibility might become a reality is a central thread in the essays collected in this book.

At the same time, further reflection has led me to ponder a wider application of the image of the spiral as a clue to the meaning of mission. It suggests, first of all that mission is a "God-thing". It is primarily about the initiative and action of God, as has been captured since the 1950s by the luminous phrase *missio Dei*. In terms of geography it is not a matter of a uni-directional movement from one territory to another. The 1963 Mexico City World Mission Conference found it liberating to recognise that it was concerned with "mission on six continents". Later the phrase "mission from everywhere to everywhere" expressed a spiral-like idea of what this movement involved. A further twist was to suggest that it could be considered "mission from everywhere to everyone". Going beyond geography, *Together Towards Life* offered a framework of margins and centre with an understanding that God works from the margins rather than from the centre.⁵ Again the image of a spiral-like movement proves to be evocative. Surveying the global scene today Andrew Walls has remarked that: "The territorial 'from-to' idea that underlay the older missionary movement has to give way to a concept much more like that of Christians within the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries: parallel presences in different circles and at different levels, each seeking

⁴ David Smith, "Junction or Terminus? Christianity in the West at the Dawn of the Third Millennium," in Timothy Yates ed., *Mission – An Invitation to God's Future*, Calver: Cliff College, 2000, pp. 85-98 [90].

⁵ Jooseop Keum ed., *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, Geneva: WCC, 2012, §36-54.

to penetrate within and beyond its circle."⁶ Mission as God's spiral of renewal! If this book can make any small contribution to understanding more fully how the movement of the Spirit of God brings a spiral of renewal to the life of our world, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

⁶ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of the Faith*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark & New York: Orbis, 1996, pp. 258-59.

1. "Blessed Reflex": Mission as God's Spiral of Renewal¹

"Really quite suddenly in 1963, something very profound ruptured the character of the nation and its people, sending organised Christianity on a downward spiral to the margins of social significance."² So argues the historian Callum Brown in his provocatively titled book, *The Death of Christian Britain*. He describes a great change in the relation of the British people to the Christian faith which they had, by and large, espoused for more than a thousand years:

In unprecedented numbers, the British people since the 1960s have stopped going to church, have allowed their church membership to lapse, have stopped marrying in church and have neglected to baptise their children. Meanwhile, their children, the two generations who grew to maturity in the last thirty years of the twentieth century, stopped going to Sunday school, stopped entering confirmation or communicant classes, and rarely, if ever, stepped inside a church to worship in their entire lives. The cycle of inter-generational renewal of Christian affiliation, a cycle which had for so many centuries tied the people however closely or loosely to the churches and to Christian moral benchmarks, was permanently disrupted in the 'swinging sixties.' Since then, a formerly religious people have entirely forsaken organised Christianity in a sudden plunge into a truly secular condition.³

Brown goes on to illustrate this experience not only with the familiar, relentless downward trend in all the statistical indicators of participation in church life but also, perhaps more importantly, by showing how markedly the population has departed from what he calls the "discursive do-

¹ "Blessed reflex" was a phrase used by 19th century mission leaders who anticipated a time when the "sending" churches of the West would be challenged and renewed by the churches then springing up in Africa, Asia and Latin America. See Wilbert R. Shenk, "Recasting Theology of Mission: Impulses from the Non-Western World," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 25/3 (July 2001), p 105.

² Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 1.

³ Ibid.

main" of Christianity.⁴ It is with this in mind that the literary critic A.N. Wilson also observes that there has occurred an epochal change in the relation of the British peoples to the Christian faith: "Now that the habit of learning the old Christian stories and prayers has all but died out, now that Christianity has turned itself back into a sect, there really seems to be no future. There will be Christians in the next generation, but we can be sadly certain that there will be no Christian literature – that came to an end with the generation of T.S. Eliot."⁵ So serious is the demise of Christian faith, in Wilson's judgement, that he is led to predict that "Christianity will decline yet further in the next 1,000 years to the point of near extinction – because Christians themselves no longer believe it to be true."⁶

These two voices, among many others, suggest that we are entering a period when Christian faith has become peripheral, sectarian, and irrelevant to the construction of reality in which the British population is engaged.

One of the most ironic features of this sudden and dramatic collapse of Christian faith among the people of Britain is that it has occurred just at the point when it has registered what might well finally be judged to be its most spectacular success. Over the many centuries when Christian faith was deeply embedded in British institutions and popular culture, the churches had very limited impact beyond the shores of the UK. It is only in the last two centuries, and particularly in the second half of the 20th century, that there has been a great response in many different parts of the world to the Christian gospel introduced by missionaries from Britain. To look no further than Scotland, we could say with certainty today that the number of those worldwide whose profession of Christian faith arises, directly or indirectly, from the work of Scottish missionaries far exceeds the total population of Scotland itself. Indeed, there are

⁴ See e.g. *ibid*, p. 195.

⁵ A.N. Wilson, "The Poisoned Chalice," *Guardian Saturday Review*, Saturday 25 November 2000, p. 2; cf A.N. Wilson, "Christianity and Modernity," in Stephen Platten ed., *Ink and Spirit: Literature and Spirituality*, London: Canterbury Press, 2000.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 1.

at least five Presbyterian churches, owing their origins to Scottish influence and the work of Scottish missionaries, which are today much bigger than the Church of Scotland itself,⁷ while there are also similarly originated movements of Christian faith that have happily flowed into strong united churches. Just as the church in Scotland has begun to crumble at its historic centre, so on the various edges of its most far-flung missionary outreach it has experienced a period of unprecedented growth and expansion.

The irony is compounded by the fact that the overseas missionary involvement which has proved to be by far the most significant religious contribution which Scotland has made to the world, has always been a hand-to-mouth enterprise, a minority pursuit, rather on the fringe of the life of the church, lightly regarded by most of its mainstream leadership. Andrew Walls has commented that:

The missionary movement is arguably the single most important event in the history of Western Christianity; certainly no other so profoundly altered the form of Christian presence in the world. Scotland played its full share within that movement. But while the Scottish perception of missions has sometimes (not always) been a high one, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the missionary project, whether forwarded by the abundance of the rich or the tithes of the poor, was always a peripheral one, always on the edge of the home church's vision, always the direct concern of the few.⁸

⁷ Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Presbyterian Church of Korea (TongHap), Presbyterian Church of Korea (HapDong), and Presbyterian Church (USA). See Lukas Vischer and Jean-Jacques Bauswein ed., *The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools and International Organisations*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

⁸ Andrew F. Walls, "Missions," in Nigel M. de S. Cameron ed., *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993, p. 573. In another article Walls makes a similar point in reviewing Owen Chadwick's *The Victorian Church*: "Chadwick's work reveals that the British missionary movement at its height was only peripheral to the Victorian church. One of the features of the nineteenth century Western Christianity that most determined the future of the faith made quite a small impression on its contemporaries, and has

From a Christian point of view, it is difficult to reflect on this remarkable development without referring to the Pauline texts that speak of God's topsy-turvy mode of operation. "The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.... God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are..."⁹

In keeping with the church's own tradition of largely ignoring its overseas missionary engagement, contemporary critics such as Brown and Wilson make practically no reference to this dimension of the church's life when they analyse its demise. One would certainly never guess from reading their work that they have lived through one of the great ages of expansion in the history of the Christian church nor that this vigorous church growth was apparently ignited by agents of a Western Church that is in supposedly terminal decline. In this respect, they are representative of a common perception of Christianity in British society today. While British Christianity is apparently crumbling in its historic heartlands, in many of the new contexts around the world, into which it has been transplanted, it is undergoing rapid, sustained and vigorous growth. Could there be any kind of fruitful relation between the vigorous growth and the virtual collapse. Is there any way in which the growth on the periphery could re-invigorate the centre?

A survey of Christian history might not, at least at first sight, be very encouraging. For Christianity appears to be not a very centrist kind of religion. Whereas most other religions have continued to be organised around their historic centres, Christianity has proved to be a pilgrim sort of faith – at its best when it is on a journey, crossing a frontier, entering a new context. Neither the fall of Jerusalem nor the fall of Rome in the ancient world brought about its demise. For, although these had been significant centres, the Christian faith was already advancing across new

made a correspondingly small one on their historians." Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of the Faith*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark & New York: Orbis, 1996, p. 144.

⁹ I Corinthians 1:25, 27-28.

frontiers by the time they were imperilled. It could readily be argued that it is quite typical of Christianity that, when its long-time European home is becoming inhospitable, it has already set off on a fresh journey and has been embraced by the peoples of the great southern continents on an unprecedented scale. On this analysis it could well be that modern Europe will share the fate of such earlier centres of Christian influence as North Africa or Turkey, which nurtured the faith in its early centuries but which today are largely bereft of Christian presence. The renewal of Christian faith occurring in non-Western societies is already leading to the establishment of new centres of Christian thought and action. It may be that the destiny of the church in Europe is simply to continue to be a steadily ebbing backwater within the onward flow of world Christianity until it has practically disappeared.

There is, however, another possibility. Just as Paul was driven by the vision that the weakened church in Jerusalem could be helped by the vigorous new congregations emerging in such places as Philippi,¹⁰ so it may be that the new life on what were once seen as the fringes will prove to be the source of renewal for today's European church. What would have to happen for the renewal of the faith among the younger churches to have an invigorating effect upon the ancient, and allegedly dying, churches of the West? What would the Western churches have to do in order to be hospitable to such a movement and to promote it? It is important here to eschew facile or mechanical answers. Renewal *may* come to the Western churches by the institution of the 5.00 am prayer meetings which have sparked the growth of the church in Korea, but it will not automatically do so. There will be no simple "copy-cat" answers. That realism, however, should not prevent us from dreaming the dream and taking a hard look at what would be involved in such a process of renewal. Three steps can be suggested.

1) Recognise that mission and the mission field have completely changed.

To begin with, it would be necessary to recognise the integrity of the Christian faith of the younger churches of the south. Having been for

¹⁰ See Romans 15:25-29; II Corinthians 8:1-4.

centuries the repository of Christian faith and its authoritative expositor, the Western church has to undergo a mental revolution if it is to recognise that Christianity's centre of gravity has shifted to the south. David Smith has commented that: "The perplexity experienced by many European churches today is related to the struggle to come to terms with the fact that the real centres of Christian life and growth are now located in the non-Western world. Long established habits of thought and practice based on the assumption that the churches of the West occupy centre-stage in the purposes of God must be abandoned in the light of this new reality. We find ourselves standing in the wings, witnessing others take the lead in God's still unfolding drama of redemption."¹¹ This recognition is a big step for Western Christians to take. Ultimately, however, they have no choice. Having encouraged and enabled others to receive the gospel on their own terms, the Western missionary must be prepared for the faith to find a new form and idiom. The cat is out of the bag. As Lamin Sanneh comments: "When one translates [the gospel], it is like pulling the trigger of a loaded gun: the translator cannot recall the hurtling bullet ... The center of the religion shifted to the particular culture that was being addressed."¹² Having offered the faith to others, Western Christians must be prepared to live with the consequences of their passionate engagement with it; and with the reality that the outcome has often proved to be quite different from that which was anticipated. As Dana Robert has remarked: "Ultimately, the most interesting lessons from the missionary outreach during the Western colonial era is what happened to Christianity when the missionaries weren't looking, and after the colonizers withdrew."¹³

The outcome, on a global scale, is that both the nature of the church and the structure of its mission have undergone an irreversible change. As

¹¹ David Smith, "Junction or Terminus? Christianity in the West at the Dawn of the Third Millennium," in Timothy Yates ed., *Mission – An Invitation to God's Future*, Calver: Cliff College, 2000, p. 92.

¹² Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, New York: Orbis, 1989, pp. 53, 69.

¹³ Dana Robert, "Shifting Southward: Global Christianity Since 1945," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 24/2 (April 2000), p. 57.

Andrew Walls observes: "Christian faith is now more diffused than at any previous time in its history; not only in the sense that it is more geographically, ethnically and culturally widespread than ever before, but in the sense that it is diffused *within* more communities. The territorial 'from-to' idea that underlay the older missionary movement has to give way to a concept much more like that of Christians within the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries: parallel presences in different circles and at different levels, each seeking to penetrate within and beyond its circle."¹⁴

This involves not only a new humility on the part of the church in the West but also a new form of missionary engagement. It involves a new kind of missionary, with particular qualities. This was recognised by Simon Barrington Ward when he reflected on what the new missionary situation meant for Church Missionary Society: "We could never really escape the continuing concealed colonialism. But at least we must recognize now, wholeheartedly, that in so many ways we must decrease that others may increase. The world missionary task must be tackled by Christians from all the churches acting together and no longer by one-sided initiatives from or within the West.... We knew we must be smaller and more selective. But our goal was to help send, bring and place the most creative and redemptive 'people in mission' we could find in situations where they could open the way to a deeply pervasive, spiritual renewal. *Only people who are constantly being changed can bring change to others.*"¹⁵ Gone are the days when Christian mission could be confused with the extension of Western influence or when the Christian missionary could be the epitome of dogmatism and inflexibility.

2) Recognise that we are always the recipients as well as the agents of mission.

A critical point to recognise in the new missionary paradigm is that *all* are addressees as well as agents of mission. The best missionaries have always recognised this reality. It is *God's* mission. God is always the au-

¹⁴ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, pp. 258-59.

¹⁵ Simon Barrington Ward, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 23/2 (April 1999), p. 64, my italics.

thentic subject of mission and human involvement is always *first* as addressee and *only then* as agent. The untold secret of the missionary movement is that it was the missionaries who were converted, as time and again they came to an enlarged and a deepened understanding of the gospel through their experience of encounter with another culture and context. This remained, unfortunately, largely a secret and the church at large was little aware that it was being transformed, or at least had the potential for transformation, through the encounter with others and their apprehension of the gospel. Even after a generation when "partnership" has been the governing paradigm in the practice of mission, few members of the church in Scotland appear to have a vivid expectation that they will be on the receiving end of evangelization through engagement with church and mission elsewhere.

The thinking of many is still governed by a 19th century linear model of mission, where it is all about the transmission of something *from* here *to* there. Willem Saayman has pointed out that: "In such an understanding the 'sending' church acts only as starting point and provider of personnel and resources. The 'sending' church *in its essential nature*, though, *can be left totally untouched by the process...*" By contrast Saayman proposes that: "the process and progress from church to mission to church should rather be seen as cyclical, and specifically as an ascending, never-ending spiral. From the very beginning, therefore, the progress is not in a straight line *away* from the 'sending' church *to* some far-away unreached 'mission field', but rather curving back to it throughout."¹⁶ A church elder in the Scottish Highlands once remarked that he regretted that we now have fewer missionaries serving in Africa because they made such fine ministers when they came back!¹⁷ He had detected that the outreach of the Church of Scotland in other parts of the world had "curved back" and had an invigorating effect on the church in Scotland.

In times past this occurred through the exploits of missionaries and the contribution they could make when they returned to this country. That dynamic has not disappeared but it is complemented by two significant

¹⁶ Willem Saayman, "'Missionary by its Very Nature'. A Time to Take Stock," *Missionalia*, Vol. 28/1 (April 2000), pp. 19-20.

¹⁷ Oral Testimony, Presbytery of Dunkeld and Meigle, Pitlochry, May 2000.

newer movements. The first of these is the migration of people from areas of church renewal and growth to areas of church decline. It is instructive that several Church of Scotland congregations on mainland Europe have increasingly attracted members of African and Asian origin. For example, by the early 2000s more than half the elders on the Rotterdam Kirk Session were Africans who brought vigorous leadership to the life of the congregation.¹⁸ This trend may be little evident in Scotland itself at present but it is clearly apparent in England and a remarkable sign of the times. "Christians in Britain," writes Walter Hollenweger, "prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black."¹⁹ This migratory movement may prove to be a key to preventing the disappearance of Christian faith in the West. Migration was much more limited at the time when Christianity practically died out in North Africa. In today's globalized world, the total disappearance of a faith in one part of the world seems less likely. It may be that countries like the UK *could* continue to be islands of recession in a world where, for the most part, the church is being renewed and expanded but they *will* be exposed to missionary movements that will resist this trend. The movements of African Christianity now increasingly making their presence felt in Britain are characterized by Roswith Gerloff as follows:

African missions do not distinguish between the spiritual and the material. They base evangelism on spiritual empowerment, as well as on social care for people. Different from European style linear structures, African missions travel along pre-existing social relations such as family, friendship, village or island community, and trade and work comradeship. They rest on charismatic leadership, communicate in songs and signals, and understand the human person in his or her relationship to community. Therefore, faith becomes the light, reliable and comforting baggage in the process of migration and crisis. It testifies to a God who wanders with people through the wilderness. It believes in

¹⁸ Robert Calvert, Annual Report for 2000, Church of Scotland Board of World Mission; cited with the author's permission.

¹⁹ Walter J. Hollenweger, "Foreword" in Roswith Geldoff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies: the Black Church Movement in Britain in its Intercultural Theological and Cultural Interaction*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1992, Vol. I, p. ix.

mutual respect and sharing. It turns the personal commitment of witnesses into a vehicle for *being* the gospel to be proclaimed.²⁰

Is it possible that this surprising new movement of Christian mission may prove to be a spiral of renewal? Could the old "mission fields" of the "third world" provide the springboard for a fresh evangelization of the West?²¹

One of the most fascinating features of this new missionary paradigm is that, by and large, it is mission *from* the poor *to* the rich, *from* the periphery *to* the centre in the global economy. What excites the Christian imagination about this is that, after the long years when the evangel was compromised by being intertwined with imperial power and economic exploitation, it is now restored to the poor and marginalized who were its original agents. Marvelling at the fact that it was despised Galileans who first preached the gospel which eventually won the allegiance of the mighty Roman Empire, James Engel and William Dyrness attempt to translate this into contemporary terms and suggest that "a good illustration would be to suppose the gospel would spread from the poorest of the poor in Africa to Wall Street in New York, the Miracle Mile in Chicago or the seats of power in Washington, D.C. Perhaps the gospel would capture the hearts of itinerant day labourers in Nigeria and spread by traders throughout Africa. Eventually one of them is assigned to an embassy in Washington, D.C., and starts a small fellowship that acts like an igniting spark."²² As a matter of fact, this is already happening. Certainly, it would

²⁰ Roswith Gerloff, "Editorial" in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXIX No. 354 (July 2000), 277. This special issue of the *IRM* on "Open Space: The African Christian Diaspora in Europe and the Quest for Human Community" includes several studies which amplify this theme. See also Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998.

²¹ A recent press release from the Council of African Christian Communities in Europe claims that "there are more than three million Christians of African origin living in Europe," *International Review of Mission*, vol. 89, no. 354 (July 2000), p. 304.

²² James F. Engel & William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* Downers Grove: IVP, 2000, p. 42.

stand out as one of God's surprises if today's asylum-seekers were to prove to be the agents of renewal for faith and life in the West!

The second great trend that calls for attention is one that is moving in the opposite direction. Just as migration is bringing non-Westerners into the West as never before, so Westerners are travelling and being exposed to the non-Western world on an unprecedented scale. In 2000 47 million people took flights out of the UK and this number has been increasing by 5% per year. Even if a modest proportion of these travellers encounter vibrant new expressions of Christian faith in the course of their travels, this would be a significant expression of mission in our time. Furthermore, the arrival of the internet has vastly increased the contact which people have with distant parts of the world. Though many internet-users remain within a limited sphere and relate largely to commercially-driven material, there are wider possibilities to be explored. If, of the 400,000 emails sent every second, only a tiny proportion contained material of missional significance, this would constitute an important missionary movement of our time.

We may not easily recognise it because it has none of the regimented, well-oiled machinery of the modern missionary movement of the 19th and 20th centuries. There is no head office, no organising committee, no command structure, no comprehensive strategic direction. It is a post-modern movement of individuals making their own connections, developing their own perspectives and functioning within networks that they themselves have constructed. Paul Pierson reflects on this change when, as a member of the older generation, he contrasts his experience with that of young people today: "We were loyal to the concept of missions, we trusted institutions, including mission organizations, and of course we were interested in specific missionaries. The younger generation today wants to know and experience everything almost immediately and is generally impatient and distrustful of institutions of all kinds. An additional factor is a general suspicion and fear of long-term commitments, which affects attitudes toward traditional institutions, including mission

agencies."²³ To those shaped by a classical Enlightenment approach to the construction of knowledge and the organisation of society, this diffuse, individualised, networking world is a confusing one. Yet it holds possibilities for a new generation growing up in the West to have a fresh encounter with living Christian faith.

If church overseas mission boards and independent missionary societies are to be effective in this new context, they have to pass through a considerable paradigm shift. Stanley Green indicates what this has involved for North American Mennonites over the past few years: "We needed to be willing to adapt our self-identity from that of a centralized bureaucracy that 'owned' the mission (we designed the initiatives, recruited the workers, deployed the personnel, and then courted and cajoled congregations to support our program) to a more decentralized, networking entity focused on developing synergistic partnerships with regional ... conferences, congregations, and international partners."²⁴ Perhaps the most marked feature of this paradigm shift is that the missionary enterprise ceases to be the project of a tightly-knit core of dedicated professionals who make a career of it; and becomes an open-ended venture in which large numbers of people can enjoy direct participation for longer and shorter periods.

Not that the need for dedicated, full-time mission practitioners has come to an end. On the contrary! But they need to be able to accommodate a vast diversity of short-term participants in the mission enterprise. Ted Ward offers wise counsel when he writes that: "Although in the case of some of these people, at least in the short run, such experiences may be a waste of time and resources of the mission agency, for many of these Western adventurers such overseas junkets are the spark that ignites mission consciousness and awakens a concern for more effective forms of missionary presence. For slow-minded mission agencies the short-term phenomenon will be an increasing nuisance. But for creative agen-

²³ Paul E. Pierson, "Local Churches in Mission: What's Behind the Impatience with Traditional Mission Agencies?," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 22/4 (October 1998), p. 148.

²⁴ Stanley W. Green, "How Mennonites Repositioned a Traditional Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 23/4 (October 1999), p. 162.

cies, ways are already being found to encourage and support these activities as additional species and types of Christian relationship and development."²⁵ Not least of the reasons for undertaking such adaptation is that fact that exposure to the youthful vigour of Christian movements elsewhere may be the spark that ignites a renewed experience of faith for a new generation of Westerners.

3) Cultivate the sense of adventure that is essential to authentic Christian mission.

There can be little doubt that the second half of the 20th century was a time of rapid cultural change in Britain, nor that this included a marked recession of Christian faith. So much so that Andrew Walls has remarked that: "... western Europe has become a prime area, perhaps *the* prime area for identification as a mission field. It would be easy to adapt some of the nineteenth-century descriptions of the need of the heathen – the ignorance of religion, the immorality, the proneness to warfare, the inhumanities and injustice widely accepted in society – as a stirring call to Christians of the southern continents to undertake the salvation of the west."²⁶ From a slightly different angle Lesslie Newbigin made a similar observation when he remarked that: "The attacks on (the liberal, secular democratic state) from powerful new religious fanaticisms are possible only because its own internal weaknesses have become so clear: the disintegration of family life, the growth of mindless violence, the vandalism which finds satisfaction in destroying whatever is comely and useful, the growing destruction of the environment by limitless consumption fuelled by ceaseless propaganda, the threat of nuclear war, and – as the deepest root of it all – the loss of any sense of a meaningful future."²⁷

At the same time, just as the nineteenth-century missionaries had to learn, often the hard way, that the societies in which they found themselves were not all bad and that indeed they often had much to teach the

²⁵ Ted Ward, "Repositioning Mission Agencies for the Twenty-first Century," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 23/4 (October 1999), p. 150.

²⁶ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, p. 258.

²⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, London: SPCK, 1989, p. 223.

missionary, so it will be a surprise if the post-modern Western societies do not possess, besides their obvious decadence, those features which will make possible a new, revealing and energising appropriation of the gospel of Christ. Is not such a new cultural frontier one that excites the Christian imagination? If there is one thing that the Christian church should have learnt from its long history, and particularly from the great age of expansion over the last two centuries, it is how to engage with a new cultural context. As David Smith has pointed out: "It should be possible for churches possessing two centuries of accumulated experience and expertise in cross-cultural missionary endeavour to discover faithful and creative ways of ensuring that Christ becomes a living option for a generation shaped by postmodern culture."²⁸ Amongst the lessons learnt from this experience would be the confidence that Christ is translatable, that new language is not threat but opportunity, that there is need to take risks, to be ready for the gospel to be seen in a new light, to be willing to let the terms be set by the "receptor" community. In the missionary's experience of learning a new language and seeking to communicate the gospel in that new language, there were invariably two stages.²⁹ The first was one of frustration where the missionary is painfully aware of her inability to communicate the gospel message in the terms to which she is accustomed. The second stage was the gloriously liberating one when the missionary realised that the new language was opening up all kinds of new insights into the meaning of the gospel, sometimes turning upside down the received understanding. To reach that second stage it was necessary for the missionary to enter deeply into the language and culture, to esteem it, to come to love it. It is only through such experience that the faith will be commended to the peoples of the West in the new cultural context into which they have entered. But you reach that stage only when you have the missionary sense of adventure that takes you to the

²⁸ David Smith, "Junction or Terminus? Christianity in the West at the Dawn of the Third Millennium," in Timothy Yates ed., *Mission – An Invitation to God's Future*, Calver: Cliff College, 2000? p. 90.

²⁹ I owe this thought to Kai Funkschmidt who offered a reflection along these lines at the annual conference of the Churches Commission on Mission, Durham, September 2000.

vulnerability of a new place with the confidence that the gospel of Christ can be translated into the native idiom.

This chapter began with Callum Brown's claim that organised Christianity in this country has been sent on "a downward spiral to the margins of social significance".³⁰ It has suggested that there is evidence of another movement, which should not be discounted by anyone seeking to take a longer view: mission as what Willem Saayman called "an ascending, never-ending spiral".³¹ Today, as we survey the wreckage of a once-strong church in the Western world and observe the vigorous new growth of Christianity in the non-Western world, this should not be a source of despair or demoralisation. On the contrary! There *can be* a renewing force channelled from the latter to the former: mission as God's spiral of renewal! It takes effect as we recognise the changed reality, open ourselves to engagement with the other, and engender the confidence that the new cultural frontier is not impermeable to the gospel of Christ but rather represents an opportunity to rediscover Jesus Christ and make the gospel a living option for the peoples of Britain in the 21st century. Were these three dynamics to take effect, then it may transpire that the obituary of Christianity in Britain was published prematurely.

³⁰ Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 1.

³¹ Willem Saayman, "'Missionary by its Very Nature'. A Time to Take Stock," *Missionalia*, Vol. 28/1 (April 2000)," p. 20.

2. "Give us Friends!" The Relational Dimension of Christian Mission

Studies of the missionary movement have often been so occupied with social, political, and cultural dynamics—all well worthy of study—that they have overlooked this fundamental reality: amidst the playing out of these broader dynamics, there were individual human beings forming friendships. Indeed, this chapter will argue that the personal friendships formed in the context of missionary encounter often proved to be extraordinary both in their depth and in their transformative effect. Retrieving this dimension of the missionary experience, moreover, is of much more than merely historical interest. The world in which mission takes effect today is one which is tired of ideology, suspicious of power, and wary of rhetoric. It may be that authentic personal friendship, more than ever, is the channel through which the good news of Jesus Christ will cross boundaries and break new ground.

Primary reference will be made to Africa since African experience of Christian faith did much to help it to recover its relational aspect. The Enlightenment and the industrial revolution in the West had rendered an understanding of Christian faith that was more individual and cerebral. The strength of community life in Africa brought a perspective that retrieved the biblical emphasis on the relational. Whereas Descartes had convinced his European contemporaries that "I think therefore I am," Africans countered with a view of life that has been characterized as "We are, therefore I am."

Western missionaries in Africa were drawn into this relational understanding of life, and one thing it offered to them was a remarkable experience of friendship. Not in every case did this occur. There were missionaries who remained aloof and condescending in their attitude to African colleagues. The heyday of the missionary movement coincided with the high noon of social Darwinism. By no means was every missionary immune to its influence. What is remarkable, however, is that so many were—breaking through the social, political, and philosophical consensus to form deep friendships in the African community. So much so that they sometimes became strangers in their original homeland. Such developments are not easily accommodated by orthodox post-

colonial critique and, as a result, are often overlooked in scholarly analysis of missionary encounters.

This chapter seeks to redress the balance. It will put the focus on the personal friendships that were formed in the context of missionary engagement and explore how this dimension might take effect in worldwide cross-cultural mission today and tomorrow. In pursuit of this question it will range widely across the global scope of the missionary movement. However, the author makes no apology for a certain bias toward Malawi. For it was Malawians who first taught him about the possibility of crossing cultural boundaries to build mutually transformative friendships. Discovering this possibility through personal experience as a Scot in Malawi proved to be a key to understanding how it has taken effect in many other contexts also.

Friendship at the Heart of the Missionary Movement

If there was one meeting at which the modern missionary movement found its most concentrated summation it was the "Edinburgh 1910" World Missionary Conference. If there was one moment in that great conference which has been remembered more than any other, it was the speech of the young Indian delegate V.S. Azariah. He addressed the question of race relationships within the missionary enterprise. Taking the bull by the horns, he complained of "a certain aloofness, a lack of mutual understanding and openness, a great lack of frank intercourse and friendliness" between European missionaries and national Christians.¹ Though not included in the official record, one participant recalled Azariah making another memorable comment: "Too often you promise us thrones in heaven, but will not offer us chairs in your drawing rooms."² In his concluding peroration he expressed both appreciation and exasperation:

¹ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World*, Report of Commission I, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, pp. 411–412.

² H. F. Houlder, "'Edinburgh 1910': Reminiscences of the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in June 1910," 3, cited in Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, p. 124.

"Through all the ages to come the Indian church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us FRIENDS!"³ This indictment of the missionary movement, in a context where it was largely complacent about its supposedly self-evident virtue, struck the conference "like a bomb," according to one observer.⁴ In subsequent years the bomb has continued to detonate as the speech has challenged the churches to realize the ideals of oneness, catholicity, mutual respect, and friendship.

Dana Robert has pointed out an often-overlooked aspect of Azariah's speech: He was pleading for something he had already experienced.⁵ It was because he had experienced this quality of friendship that he was able to appeal for it. Through his work in the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Azariah had enjoyed some very close friendships across social, cultural, and national barriers. This gave him the vision that such a rich quality of friendship might characterize the missionary movement as a whole. It was by discerning what had lain at the heart of the missionary movement at its best that Azariah was able to point out where it had fallen short and urge it to fulfil its deepest instinct and highest calling.

The archetypal missionary experience was to begin with a patronizing attitude that assumed the missionary carried all the wisdom necessary to enlighten the "benighted" people to whom he or she went, but then gradually to come to love the people, their language, culture, and society to such an extent as to become more identified with them than with their own original compatriots in the homeland. If this was not true of all

³ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *The History and Records of the Conference*, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, p. 315.

⁴ Mrs. Isobel Whitehead, wife of the Bishop of Tirunelveli, cited in Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, p. 126.

⁵ Dana L. Robert, "Cross-Cultural Friendship in the Creation of Twentieth-Century World Christianity," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 2 (April 2011), pp. 100–1.

missionaries, it was certainly true of the best of them. E. Stanley Jones, for example, wrote, "I find that my love for India has a quality in it now that it did not have in the early days. I went to India through pity, I stay through respect. I love India because she is lovable, I respect her because she is respectable; she has become dear to me because she is endearing."⁶ Similarly, James Legge, the Scottish missionary who became the greatest sinologist of his generation, confessed, "I thought of [the Chinese people] better, both morally and socially, when I left them, than when I first went among them, more than thirty years before."⁷ There is more than a little truth in the cryptic saying that the untold secret of the missionary movement is that it was the missionaries who were converted!

In this process friendship was a decisive instrument. Reflecting on his experience as a missionary at Ahmednagar in Northwest India, Robert Hume observed, "The first word of the Gospel is the word Brother, never the word Sinner, nor even the word Christ, as is sometimes imagined."⁸ Identification and solidarity were the hallmarks of effective missionary engagement. Amongst many examples of missionaries who discovered an extraordinary quality of friendship among the people with whom they worked, consideration might be given to Edwin Smith, whose *Golden Stool* was one of the first books to offer a positive appreciation of African

⁶ E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, London; Hodder & Stoughton, 1925, p. 252.

⁷ James Legge, "Christianity and Confucianism Compared in Their Teaching of the Whole Duty of Man," in *Non-Christian Religions of the World*, ed. Sir William Muir, New York: Fleming and Revell, 1884, p. 34, in Lauren F. Pfister, *Striving for the "Whole Duty of Man": James Legge and the Scottish Protestant Encounter with China. Assessing Confluences in Scottish Nonconformism, Chinese Missionary Scholarship, Victorian Sinology, and Chinese Protestantism*, vol. 2, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004, p. 233.

⁸ Robert A. Hume, submission to the World Missionary Conference Commission IV on "The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions," cited in Kenneth Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love: Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions 1846–1914*, London: Epworth Press, 1995, p. 202, quoted by Dana Robert, "Friendship in the Creation of World Christianity 1910–2010," Duff and Drummond Lecture, Stirling, Scotland, 25 May 2010.

culture. This assessment had been informed in no small degree by his friendship with Mungalo. As he professed in the conclusion of his book, "If two men ever loved each other, it was Mungalo and I."⁹ This, it should be noted, was written at the height of the colonial era when racism was at its most pervasive and institutionalized. Yet friendships made in the context of the missionary movement could break through all social and political pressures to achieve a quality of inter-personal relationship that was inspiring and productive to a remarkable degree.

A Case Study: Scots and Malawians

This can be well-illustrated by the experience of Scots and Malawians who met through the Scottish missions in Malawi. The beginning of a remarkable series of friendships can be traced back to the arrival of the first missionary to reach Malawi, David Livingstone, who entered the area now known as Malawi in 1859. Livingstone's hostility to racism comes out in remarks that he made in the course of the Zambezi Expedition which took him to Malawi. He comments, for example, "Most writers believe the blacks to be savages, nearly all blacks believe the whites to be cannibals. The nursery hobgoblin of the one is black, of the other white. Without going further into these unwise comparisons, we must smile at the heaps of nonsense which have been written about the negro intellect."¹⁰

This scornful attitude toward racism arose from the simple reality of having lived close to African communities, to the extent of becoming more comfortable among Africans than among Europeans. It is striking that Livingstone's relationships with fellow-Europeans were often stormy while his friendships with Africans were marked by a remarkable degree of affection and loyalty. Both in the trans-African trek that took him and

⁹ Edwin W. Smith, *The Golden Stool: Some Aspects of the Conflict of Cultures in Africa*, London: Holborn, 1926, quoted by Dana L. Robert, "Cross-Cultural Friendship in the Creation of Twentieth-Century World Christianity," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 2 (April 2011), p. 102.

¹⁰ David and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries; and of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa*, London: John Murray, 1865, p. 67.

his Makololo companions to Luanda on the west coast and in his final journeys searching for the source of the Nile in Tanzania and Zambia, Livingstone spent many months entirely in African company. This gave him a closeness to African community life, and an appreciation of its qualities (which would become rarer in the later colonial era in Africa) and reinforced the anti-racism he had developed in his early days in South Africa. Tellingly, he was able to say, "I have never met an African who did not know whose side I am on."

The generations of Scottish missionaries who followed Livingstone to Malawi were inspired by this vision. Time and again they resisted the advance of the racist regimes in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia in order to protect the (e)quality of human relationships which they enjoyed in Malawi.¹¹ Though not always living up to their highest ideals, the Scottish missions were characterised over generations by the profound and inspiring nature of the relationships formed between Scots and Malawians. The quality of such friendship can be gauged from the assessment offered by David Rubadiri, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malawi: "Malawi is very much a Scottish country because of the early presence of the Scots Mission here... Malawi is a Scotsman's country. The friends we knew and lived with are people who, though they've retired back to Scotland, are people who are in spirit with us here. I know it doesn't make sense to put it that way, [but] what I'm saying is that when you have lived and experienced at a spiritual and human level, human issues and problems being asked and answered, those you've experienced all those questions and answers with never leave! So though I know they are in Scotland, each time I move around Malawi, I feel them around ... because they are part and parcel of a great experience."¹² It is

¹¹ See Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996 (Reprint Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018); Andrew C. Ross, *Colonialism to Cabinet Crisis: A Political History of Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2009.

¹² In Billy Kay, *The Scottish World: A Journey into the Scottish Diaspora*, Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2006, p. 205.

this extraordinary quality of friendship that has inspired the re-
invigoration of Scotland-Malawi relations in recent times.¹³

To take but one example, consideration can be given to the close friendship formed between the leading Livingstonia missionary Donald Fraser and Jonathan Chirwa, whom he described, in the language of the time, as "my beloved native helper"¹⁴ The friendship was tested in 1918 when Chirwa, one of the first African ministers within the Livingstonia Mission, confessed to adultery and resigned from the ministry. In line with the strict standards of the Mission, he was suspended from church membership. A year later the suspension was lifted but senior missionaries like Robert Laws and A. G. MacAlpine were adamant that he could never be restored to the ministry. Year after year petitions came to the Presbytery from the Ngoni community, which was convinced of the sincerity of Chirwa's repentance. Year after year these petitions were resisted by missionary leaders concerned to set high standards for the fledgling Christian ministry.

In these debates Fraser was unwavering in his insistence that Chirwa should be restored. The two were working closely together and Fraser had no doubt that his friend would prove worthy of restoration. Finally, in 1924 he was successful and Chirwa was restored.¹⁵ To take this position involved Fraser in a head-on confrontation with his senior colleagues, but such was his confidence in Chirwa that he did not hesitate. The strength of their friendship was demonstrated after Fraser's death when his widow Agnes brought his ashes to be buried at Embangweni alongside the remains of Jonathan Chirwa.¹⁶ The two friends share the same gravestone, with the simple inscription: "In Memory of Donald Fraser and Jonathan Chirwa". As Jack Thompson remarks: "Here, under a

¹³ See Kenneth R. Ross, "'No One Can Shave Your Head in Your Absence': Scotland and Malawi Today," *Edinburgh Review* 118 (2006), pp. 25–30.

¹⁴ United Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record, June 1924, 264, cit. T. Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, p. 206.

¹⁵ Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 11 September 1924, cit. Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi*, p. 207.

¹⁶ Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi*, p. 274.

mixture of Scots pines and African indigenous trees, Fraser and Chirwa lie side by side—symbolising both their friendship, and the mixed nature of the church (both African and Scottish) which they, and many others like them, helped to create amongst the Ngoni."¹⁷

Such memories might be expected to be of interest only to a diminishing band of scholars dedicated to the study of the missionary movement. In Scotland and Malawi, however, they have taken a very different direction. They have inspired the launch of an initiative in international development which is rooted in an ethic of mutual respect and friendship. A broad-based civil society alliance from 2004 took the form of the Scotland-Malawi Partnership which states its approach in these terms:

The Scotland Malawi Partnership promotes a people-to-people model of development, rooted in the shared history between our two countries. It focuses on active relationships between people to foster a shared understanding of the development challenges facing Malawi and to support the development of practical, sustainable solutions. It is through this deeper understanding and shared human experience that the people of Scotland and Malawi will be able to effect real and lasting change, both through their own activity and by influencing the policies and actions of governments and institutions.¹⁸

Under the terms of the devolution settlement that gave Scotland its own Parliament and Government in 1999, there was no requirement or expectation that Scotland would have any independent engagement in foreign affairs. However, the sense of a special relationship with Malawi was such that there has been widespread support for the 2005 inter-governmental Scotland Malawi Cooperation Agreement, which states that it is "a reciprocal partnership based upon sharing experiences and skills ... an opportunity to learn from each other."¹⁹ Underlying the initia-

¹⁷ Jack Thompson, "Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Present: the Centenary of Loudon Mission, November 2002," *The Society of Malawi Journal* 56, no. 1 (2003), p. 30.

¹⁸ *Scotland Malawi Partnership Strategic Plan 2011–14*, Edinburgh: Scotland Malawi Partnership, 2011, p. 5.

¹⁹ Cooperation Agreement between Scotland and Malawi, November 2005, *Malawi After Gleneagles: A Commission for Africa Case Study*, Report of the

tive at government level is a popular movement of individuals and communities who have forged relationships from which they draw inspiration. The scale of this effort can be gauged from a 2010 University of Edinburgh report that estimates at least 148,000 Malawians and 85,000 Scots are involved in the development activities currently underway between Scotland and Malawi. The value of their inputs over a 12-month period is at least US \$48 million, and the benefits are being experienced by at least 1.3 million Malawians and 280,000 Scots.²⁰ The experience and ethic of friendship between the two nations that originated with the missionary movement has now become the cornerstone of a new model of international development. A 2011 Chatham House report indicates, "Senior UK diplomatic officials have pointed to the focus on relationship-building as a factor which makes Scotland's involvement with Malawi stand out from that of other donors."²¹ The main reason why it stands out is that it is rooted in an ethic of mutual respect and friendship, the legacy of the missionary movement.

A World Crying out for Friendship: Christian Mission in the Twenty-first Century

Cultural analysts have identified a significant shift that took place toward the end of the twentieth century. Thomas Friedman, for example, comments, "When the world starts to move from a primarily vertical (command and control) value-creation model to an increasingly horizontal (connect and collaborate) creation model, it doesn't just affect how business gets done. It affects everything—how communities and companies define themselves, where companies and communities stop and start, how individuals balance their different identities as consumers, employ-

Scotland-Malawi Partnership Conference, November 2005, Edinburgh: Scotland Malawi Partnership, 2005, pp. 5–6.

²⁰ Lawrence Dritsas, "Valuing Scotland's Links with Malawi: Inputs from Scotland Malawi Partnership Members," University of Edinburgh School of Social and Political Science and Global Development Academy, October 2010, p. 5.

²¹ Adjoa Anyimadu, *Scotland and Wales in Africa: Opportunities for a Coordinated UK Approach to Development*, Africa Programme Paper: AFP PP 2011/02, London: Chatham House, 2011, p. 16.

ees, shareholders and citizens, and what role government has to play."²² In this new context a decentralized way of working has quickly gained ground in commerce and culture. In the imagery of Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom, it is a change from the spider to the starfish. A spider is organized from the centre—there is a brain that tells the legs what to do. Not so with a starfish. It is a network of cells each with its own autonomy and it functions in a completely decentralized way.²³ This is the direction being taken by business. Where once a corporation with a strong headquarters would put goods on the market, now E-bay allows buyers and sellers to interact in a totally decentralized way. Where once music was produced by a few large companies and put on the market for sale, now music can be exchanged on the internet through completely decentralized networks. Church and mission are not immune to this great change.

The realm of the relational now attains a prominence that comes as a surprise to those reared in the values of the industrial age. Kevin Roberts, CEO of Saatchi and Saatchi, has remarked, "Today the stakes have reached a new high. The social fabric is spread more thinly than ever. People are looking for new emotional connections. They are looking for what they can love ... When I first suggested that Love was the way to transform business, grown CEOs blushed and slid down behind their annual accounts. But I kept at them. I knew it was Love that was missing. I knew that Love was the only way to ante up the emotional temperature and create the new kinds of relationships brands needed. I knew that Love was the only way business could respond to the rapid shift in control to consumers ... The idealism of love is the new realism of business. By building Respect and inspiring Love, business can move the world."²⁴ If business people are talking the language of love, it suggests we are in a world where a call to "give us friends" is sure to have resonance.

²² Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005, p. 201.

²³ Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*, New York: Penguin, 2006, pp. 34–35.

²⁴ Kevin Roberts, in *Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition*, ed. Alastair McIntosh, Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008, p. 232.

At the same time, the art of friendship has become a scarce commodity. To find people who know and trust one another, who share at depth their thoughts and experiences, is increasingly rare. In the assessment of Jonathan Sacks, "Conversation, the heartbeat of democratic politics, is dying and with it our chances of civic, let alone global, peace."²⁵ Sacks goes on to argue, "The question is real and urgent: how do we live with moral difference and yet sustain an overarching community? The answer ... is *conversation* — not mere debate but the disciplined act of communicating (making my views intelligible to someone who does not share them) and listening (entering into the inner world of someone whose views are opposed to my own)."²⁶ Sadly, one of the key findings of the *Atlas of Global Christianity* is that as many as 86% of all Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists do not personally know a Christian.²⁷ It bodes ill for the future of the human community that there is such a lack of personal knowledge between members of different religious communities. From the perspective of Christian mission, it can only be a matter of profound regret that the quality of friendship through which God works is so largely absent. When the world is crying out for friendship, who is better placed to respond than those who profess to follow Jesus?

"I Have Called You Friends": Mission in the Way of Jesus

In the world of the early twenty-first century religion has frequently had a bad press—often deservedly so. People have been dismayed to see religion being used ideologically to undergird political injustice, inter-communal enmity, or military aggression. They have noted that adherence to differing faiths is often, apparently, at the root of the most intractable and destructive conflicts in the modern world. They have also witnessed faith being reduced to a commodity, losing its transcendent reference, and being treated as a marketable product to serve the interests of those who "own" it. The abusive and exploitative use of religion has, understandably, caused extensive disillusionment—to the extent

²⁵ Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, London: Continuum, 2002, p. 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁷ Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross ed., *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910–2010*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, pp. 312–17.

that it has become difficult in some quarters even to get a hearing for the Gospel of Christ. What is required is not a new form of words or a louder megaphone but rather a translation of the Gospel into a lived reality that vouches for its authenticity. As Ken Gnanakan has written, "While there is need to renew our allegiance to proclaim the word faithfully, there is greater need to flesh the message out in acts that express this kingdom. Proclamation is urgent, but demonstration is the priority. The world must hear the message of the Kingdom, but it will also want to see some concrete demonstration of this message."²⁸

In a lecture given as part of the "Towards 2010" process in Edinburgh, Korean theologian Kyo-Seong Ahn proposed that, in contrast to the orthodoxy and orthopraxis which have characterized earlier periods of missionary engagement, today what is required is "orthopathy." This involves proclaiming the genuine truth "not from the head, not from the hand, but from the heart." Its keynotes are relationship, emotional intelligence, symbiosis, community, interdependence, empathy, and respect. This empathy-oriented missiology does not try to dictate or manipulate, but tries to respect others. What is indispensable in doing mission, is respect for the other human being, because with respect, a human being can keep his or her dignity in any situation. On this understanding of the task of mission, the love that makes for community is at the same time the action of evangelism.²⁹ Self-emptying, humility, and sacrifice are sorely needed to liberate the Gospel from captivity to projects of self-aggrandizement. It may be at the level of empathy that the Gospel will be seen in its true colours and show its converting power. In that case, the cultivation of friendship lies at the heart of the matter.

Perhaps it was a prophetic grasp of this emerging reality that led Lesslie Newbigin to the conclusion that "the only possible hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation which believes it" and that therefore "the clue

²⁸ Ken Gnanakan, "To Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom," in *Mission in the 21st Century*, ed. Andrew F. Walls and Cathy Ross, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2008, p. 9.

²⁹ Kyo-Seong Ahn, "From Mission to Church and Beyond: the Metamorphosis of post-Edinburgh Christianity," in *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, ed. David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross, Oxford: Regnum, 2009, pp. 74–84.

to evangelism in a secular society must be the local congregation."³⁰ In *Ancient-Future Faith*, Robert Webber writes that the most significant apologetic Christians will be able to offer in this century is the quality of life and welcome within the church. A community that embodies the experience of the kingdom will draw people to itself. He continues, "In this sense the church and its life in the world will become the new apologetic. People come to faith not because they see the logic of the argument, but because they have experienced a welcoming God in a hospitable and loving community."³¹ It is the quality of relationships it exhibits that will be decisive for the effectiveness of the witness of the church.

To be true to its calling, the church needs to function in the mode of hospitality. As Christine Pohl has written, "Hospitality should be understood as a way of life rather than a task or strategy. It is easy to slip into viewing hospitality as a strategy for reaching migrants and refugees, or for that matter, for reaching postmodern youth or homeless people. But such an approach misunderstands the basic orientation of hospitality. Hospitality is not a means to an end; it is a way of life infused by the gospel."³² To talk the language of hospitality is to move toward the kind of mutuality that is required by friendship. Anthony Gittins has suggested, "Unless the person who sometimes extends hospitality is also able sometimes to be a gracious recipient, and unless the one who receives the other as stranger is also able to become the stranger received by another, then, far from 'relationships', we are merely creating unidirectional lines of power flow, however unintended this may be. And that is quite antithetical to mission in the spirit of Jesus."³³ Friendship might seem to be the most natural

³⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, London: SPCK, 1989, 232, and *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Mission*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, 155–56.

³¹ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999, 72, cited in Christine D. Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration," *Missiology: An International Review* 31, no. 1 (January 2003), p. 12.

³² Christine D. Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXI/1 (January 2003), p. 11.

³³ Anthony Gittins, "Beyond Hospitality? The Missionary Status and Role Revisited," *International Review of Mission* 83, no. 330 (1994): 399, cited in Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration," p. 13.

thing in the world, but to achieve it, especially across barriers of division, suspicion, or hostility, is not achieved without swimming against the tide. "Hospitality will not occur in any significant way in our lives or churches," argues Pohl, "unless we give it deliberate attention. But the practice has been mostly forgotten, and because it conflicts with a number of contemporary values, we must intentionally nurture a commitment to hospitality."³⁴

Through his deep experience and profound knowledge of the Christian missionary movement, John Taylor observed, "The word *allelous*—one another—rings through the pages of the New Testament like a peal of bells."³⁵ It is intriguing that the movement now underway in North America to enable the church to regain its missionary character in the context of secular Western society, has chosen the title "Allelon" to describe the "network of missional leaders, schools and para-church organizations that envisions, inspires, engages, resources, trains, and educates leaders for the church and its mission in our culture."³⁶ Relationships, in the experience of the Allelon network, are the key to effectiveness in Christian mission. The approach championed by the network is one where, "The group of people who are empowered by the [church] board to do a *getting to know* experiment must realize that they are simply to get to know people and listen to them. They are not to go out with their Bible up their sleeve, waiting for an opportunity to proselytize. Engaging neighbours with this experiment means that people simply become present in their neighbourhoods and begin to engage people in natural ways of friendship."³⁷

To account for this theologically, it became a commonplace of the missionary movement that mission, in order to be authentic and effective,

³⁴ Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999, p. 171, cited in John Drane, *After McDonaldization: Mission, Ministry and Christian Discipleship in an Age of Uncertainty*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2008, p. 54.

³⁵ David Wood, *Poet, Priest and Prophet: Bishop John V. Taylor*, London: CTBI, 2002, p. 204.

³⁶ Alan Roxburgh and Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009, p. 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

had to be incarnational in character. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, fulfilled his mission by identifying completely with the human community in which he lived. This has set out the path that all authentic Christian mission must follow. Friendship, therefore, is at the heart of it. A lifetime in the missionary movement allowed John Taylor to conclude, "Every opening of one's whole self towards another, every taking upon oneself the burden and the gift of another, contributes a little to that quiet tide which is flowing back and forth, carrying us with it into the very being of God, sweeping us back with God into the life of the world."³⁸ It is through such interpersonal relationships that God's mission comes to expression. The kind of friendship enjoyed between Azariah and his YMCA colleagues or between Smith and Mungalo or between Livingstone and his Makololo companions or between Fraser and Chirwa, does not sit easily with the standard post-colonial critique, yet it represents the inner dynamic that accounts for its effectiveness.

This quality of friendship, moreover, may emerge in the twenty-first century as the core of the missionary strategy through which the West will be re-evangelized. It may, in fact, hold the key to effective Christian witness in every part of the world. The evidence of the missionary movement suggests that an extraordinary depth of personal friendship has been experienced at the point where people engage one another within the movement that takes the good news of Jesus Christ across cultural boundaries. Such friendships have been the hinge on which the movement of the Gospel into new situations has turned. As fresh cultural frontiers present themselves in the world of today and tomorrow, there will be need for evangelistic initiative at many levels. Not to be underestimated, however, are personal friendships forming the bridge that takes the good news of Jesus Christ from one context to another, enriching both in the process.

³⁸ David Wood, *Poet, Priest and Prophet: Bishop John V. Taylor*, London: CTBI, 2002, p. 210.

3. Like a Mask Dancing: Partnership in Mission Enters a New Mode

"The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place" (Ghanaian proverb)

Introduction: from Partnership to Twinning

It was the Whitby meeting of the International Missionary Council, held in 1947, which powerfully gave currency to the concept of "partnership" as a way in which churches could engage together in the missionary task. It was an innovative and inspiring idea to a generation of missionaries who had begun their life's work with the assumption that it would fall to them and their compatriots to provide leadership to the "daughter churches" which were emerging as a result of the work of the missionary movement. Their closeness to the emerging indigenous leadership ensured that it was, not always but often, highly rewarding for the expatriate missionaries to move to ancillary and supportive roles while able local Christians took up the leadership positions. For the latter it was no less inspiring. Having often grown up in a colonial context and in many cases having been involved in the struggle for political independence, it was a momentous and historic step for them to accept responsibility to lead their churches. In most cases the former missionary leadership and the new indigenous leadership continued to work together in close association for a generation or so. It was a revelation that they could be associated not on a basis of superior and inferior, parent and child, but on a basis of equality and mutuality. Hence the representatives of older and younger churches gathered at Whitby coined the phrase "partnership in obedience" to indicate this new understanding of the relationship in which they stood.¹ The second half of the 20th century saw a one-way understanding of mission give way to one where "mutual relationships

¹ See William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and its Nineteenth Century Background*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952, pp. 340-41.

were seen to originate in obedience to the living Word of God in Jesus Christ."²

With the passing of the years, however, partnership began to pose problems. In some cases, the partner relationship seemed to have diminishing content. The long-serving missionaries who had built up an intimate knowledge of the local language and culture were replaced, if at all, by mission partners who served for shorter terms on a philosophy of "working themselves out of a job". Opportunities to build up mutual confidence were limited and the relationship between the two churches gradually became more a matter of cherished history than of living reality. In other cases, the relationship continued to exist but was bedevilled by vast and growing disparity in the resources available on either side of the partnership. It was difficult to develop any common programme without lapsing into dependency on the one side and a patronising approach on the other. Many a partnership consultation found itself returning to the question of "the meaning of the partnership" and participants struggled to find a convincing answer. At the same time, a motion to give up on the partnership would be sure to be defeated. Those involved cherished a sense of common belonging even when uncertain of what it really meant or where it was leading.

Towards the end of the 20th century new dynamics began to emerge in the quest for authentic partnership and these have continued to strengthen in the early years of the 21st century. The communications revolution has made it possible, as never before, for local congregations to link directly with their counterparts overseas. At the same time, a decentralized way of working has quickly gained ground in commerce and culture. In the imagery of Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom, it is a change from the spider to the starfish. A spider is organised from the centre – there is a brain which tells the legs what to do. Not so with a starfish. It is a network of cells each with its own autonomy and it functions in a com-

² Birgitta Larsson and Emilio Castro, "From Missions to Mission," in John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Georges Tsetsis, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume 3, 1968-2000*, Geneva: WCC, 2004, p. 142.

pletely decentralized way.³ This is the direction being taken by business. Where once a corporation with a strong HQ would put goods on the market, now E-bay allows buyers and sellers to interact in a totally decentralized way. Where once music was produced by a few large companies and put on the market for sale, now music can be exchanged on the internet through completely decentralized networks. Mission is not immune to this great change. Where once mission enthusiasts started a mission society and developed a strong HQ to run it, now they are more likely to take action themselves and to participate in mission through a decentralized network.

In church terms this has led to a move away from an HQ-led approach to mission towards more of a local-to-local approach. There has been an upsurge of presbytery-to-presbytery and congregation-to-congregation links. In the Church of Scotland, for example, the *Church Without Walls* Report, something of a charter document as the Church entered the 21st century, called on congregations to: "research an area of the world church and establish a personal partnership with a congregation or project".⁴ In shorthand, this kind of relationships have become known as "twinnings". Rather than depending on a specialist missionary, congregations are taking ownership of particular relationships and developing them through direct involvement. To some extent this is making virtue out of necessity. The life-long missionaries around whom congregations built their global horizons in the 19th and 20th centuries were fast disappearing. If congregations were to continue having an active overseas connection they had to find a new model through which to work. Twinning was an idea whose time had come.

For congregations that have become involved in twinning with counterparts on other continents, it has been a mind-blowing and faith-stretching experience. The Church of Scotland General Assembly of 2007 heard, for example, from members of a congregation from Ruchazie, generally regarded as being among the most deprived areas of the city of

³ Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*, New York: Penguin, 2006, pp. 34-35.

⁴ *Church of Scotland General Assembly 2001, Report of the Special Commission Anent Review and Reform*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 2001, p. 36.

Glasgow. They spoke movingly of how their church and community had been affected by a twinning with the congregation in Baula in northern Malawi. They described it as a "life-changing experience" and spoke of how they had come to think of people in Baula as part of their own family. The visit of Malawians to Ruchazie had had a startling effect. People stopped in the streets to greet them. Young people, in particular, struck up a rapport with the visitors. Many more people have come to the church as a result of the Malawi connection, speaking with the minister and church members about what it has meant to them. The church has gained the attention of the community in a new way. A genuine missionary impact is being made and the church members are clearly excited by the discovery of new dimensions to their faith and new possibilities for their Christian witness.⁵ One Assembly Commissioner, Aaron Stevens, commented that: "The enthusiasm of their reports, and sincerity with which they shared their positive experiences was both moving and convincing. Churches that become involved in twinning benefit from that involvement."⁶

New Eyes to Read the New Testament

As has happened often before in church history, new circumstances, new questions and new approaches to mission have stimulated a new reading of the Bible. Becoming alert to the possibility and the importance of local congregations relating to one another across wide distances, proves to be a hermeneutical key to unlock a neglected but significant biblical theme. Biblical passages that have been accorded little attention in earlier times now have striking resonance for people engaged in this new mode of partnership in mission. Paul's letter to the Romans, for example, has been the basis for many sermons that have drawn on its profound doctrinal statements. But how often has attention been paid to the final chapter, which is devoted to the greetings that Paul extends to no less than 26 individuals? All were people whom the apostle had met at differ-

⁵ Church of Scotland General Assembly 2007, authorized recording of proceedings on 21 May 2007.

⁶ Aaron C. Stevens, "In Fatherlands and Foreign Countries: Congregational Twinning as a Missionary Practice for the 21st Century," unpublished paper, 2007, p. 5.

ent points in his many journeys and all were now based in Rome. The links, the friendships, the relationships which bound Paul to these people – these were a big part of his Christian life and experience. As he looked forward to visiting Rome he expressed what the visit would mean to him: "I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ."⁷ (Romans 15:29) Far from inconsequential add-on, this relatedness, this giving and receiving of hospitality seems to be somewhere close to the core of what it was to profess faith in Jesus Christ.

We can sense from his words how much the relationships with these 26 people meant to Paul. Yet it is not just a matter of one remarkable individual who had a genius for friendship. It seems to speak of the mode in which the early church operated. Besides individuals he mentions 5 households, each of which was the base for a church congregation. The book of Romans witnesses not only to core beliefs but also to a way of life – marked by radical openness, wide connections, and loving relationships across boundaries of distance, language and culture. The congregations found in the New Testament did not operate in isolation. They put much effort into sustaining relationships with one another, even when they were far apart geographically. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, thanked God for his "partnership" with the church in Philippi.⁸ This kind of relatedness, uniting people through faith across wide distances and vastly different contexts, is being re-discovered on a large scale. The possibilities to discover and express the special qualities of church-to-church relationship have expanded out of all recognition. Relating to the church in distant parts of the world and in very different cultures was once the province of the dedicated few. Now it is something in which we all may have a part. Rather than this being an inconsequential add-on, growing numbers are discovering that this is a core element of what it means to be a Christian.

⁷ Romans 15:29.

⁸ Philippians 1:3-5.

The Place of Twinning in the Transformative Purpose of God

Should the "missionary experience" metamorphose from something enjoyed by small numbers of people over long periods of time to something enjoyed by large numbers of people over short periods of time, there are sure to be "pros and cons". The strengths of classical missionary service – deep knowledge of language and culture and cumulative growth in effectiveness – will not be replicated in a short-term experience. On the other hand, the potential effect of a short-term trip should not be underestimated. As Robert Priest and others have argued:

Like pilgrimages, these trips are rituals of intensification, where one temporarily leaves the ordinary, compulsory, workaday life "at home" and experiences an extraordinary, voluntary, sacred experience "away from home" in a liminal space where sacred goals are pursued, physical and spiritual tests are faced, normal structures are dissolved, *communitas* is experienced, and personal transformation occurs. This transformation ideally produces new selves to be reintegrated back into everyday life "at home," new selves which in turn help to spiritually rejuvenate the churches they come from, and inspire new mission vision at home.⁹

Moreover, the transformative short-term experience may well prove to be the seed-bed from which longer-term participation in the mission of Christ will grow. As Ted Ward has commented: "Although in the case of some of these people, at least in the short run, such experiences may be a waste of time and resources of the mission agency, for many of these Western adventurers such overseas junkets are the spark that ignites mission consciousness and awakens a concern for more effective forms of missionary presence."¹⁰ It need not be a case of *either* short-term *or* long-term but could be a case of the one leading to the other. It may be that the need is for a "mixed economy" where a larger number of short-

⁹ Robert J. Priest, Terry Dischinger, Steve Rasmussen, C.M. Brown, "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXIV, no. 4 (October 2006), pp. 433-34 [431-50].

¹⁰ Ted Ward, "Repositioning Mission Agencies for the Twenty-first Century," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 23/4 (October 1999), p. 150.

term participants generate a smaller number of longer-term agents in the missionary enterprise.

Twinning, however, while it may include "short-term mission trips," potentially represents something much more substantial and enduring. One essential feature of a twinning is that it is primarily about a relationship. Aaron Stevens comments that,

one of the strongest advantages of the word 'twin' [is] the familial aspect. In talking about twins, we acknowledge siblingship, our sharing the same parentage. Furthermore, when talking about twins we describe siblings of equal rank. Some international Church relationships in the past and still today have been characterized by a tone of paternalism, in which the older church exercises a kind of authority over the younger one. At times such a disparity in status between the two parties has been attributed to one's having been instrumental in the founding of the other. On other occasions, the church from the more 'civilized' or 'progressive' culture has showed condescension towards the other one. As the term suggests, there is no room for such attitudes in twinning relationships.¹¹

As with any relationship, to enter a twinning you have to be willing to open yourself up to the other, you have to be prepared to be changed and influenced by the relationship, you need to be ready to embark on an experience of challenge and growth.

This calls for a decisive move away from the inherited model of understanding the "mission field". The thinking of many is still governed by a 19th century linear model of mission, where it is all about the transmission of something *from* here *to* there. Willem Saayman has pointed out that: "In such an understanding the 'sending' church acts only as starting point and provider of personnel and resources. The 'sending' church *in its essential nature*, though, *can be left totally untouched by the process...*" By contrast Saayman proposes that: "the process and progress from church to mission to church should rather be seen as cyclical, and specifically as an ascending, never-ending spiral. From the very begin-

¹¹ Aaron C. Stevens, "In Fatherlands and Foreign Countries: Congregational Twinning as a Missionary Practice for the 21st Century," unpublished paper, 2007," p. 5.

ning, therefore, the progress is not in a straight line *away* from the 'sending' church *to* some far-away unreached 'mission field', but rather curving back to it throughout."¹²

Anyone participating in a twinning must do so with an openness to their own transformation. It is a profound spiritual experience that lies in store. As Andrew Walls writes: "Since none of us can read the Scriptures without cultural blinkers of some sort, the great advantage, the crowning excitement which our own era of Church history has over all others, is the possibility that we may be able to read them together. Never before has the Church looked so much like the great multitude whom no man can number out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue. Never before, therefore has there been so much potentiality for mutual enrichment and self-criticism."¹³ When people embrace a twinning with this kind of expectation the way is open for all involved to be transformed through a deeper appropriation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

No one should imagine that it will be an easy thing to do. No one should imagine that it will leave them in their "comfort zone". They need to be ready to have their priorities and lifestyle challenged in ways they never expected. Their faith will be stretched as they learn to understand the gospel from a different perspective. It is, in fact, a great adventure in discipleship. Reflecting on the words of Paul to the Galatians when he thinks of his role in terms of the pains of childbirth, John Taylor once said that "Partnership between Churches in mission means an apostolic concern from one to the other to help one another to present the likeness of Christ more clearly; being in travail for one another until we all are formed in the shape of Christ."¹⁴ It is that spiritual ambition which is the driving force of a successful twinning relationship.

¹² Willem Saayman, "'Missionary by its Very Nature'. A Time to Take Stock," *Missionalia*, Vol. 28/1 (April 2000), pp. 19-20.

¹³ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, New York: Orbis, 1997, p. 15.

¹⁴ John V. Taylor, *The Uncancelled Mandate*, London: Church House, 1998, p. 10.

Conclusion

To adapt a Ghanaian proverb, faith is like a mask dancing – if you want to live it well, you do not stand in one place. Twinning provides the opportunity for many Christians to stand in a different place, to see the world with different eyes, to hear the gospel with different ears. The potential for spiritual prosperity is vast. Yet there are significant challenges to be met, some of which will be addressed in the next chapter. The conclusion stands, however, that partnership in mission is entering a new mode and it is one that is ripe with potential for deepening and broadening Christian witness in our time.

4. Beyond Religious Tourism: Twinning as a Missionary Method

The early 21st century has seen partnership in mission entering a new mode. No longer is it a centrally run operation driven by the headquarters of a church mission board or independent missionary society. Now it is becoming a radically decentralized form of engagement as local congregations make direct connections with their overseas counterparts. There is no question that this new method has rejuvenated missionary vision and enthusiasm in many congregations. Yet it is already apparent that it is not without pitfalls. While there are remarkable and enticing possibilities offered by twinning as a model for mission in the 21st century, it would be quite wrong to present it as a panacea. On the contrary, it must be acknowledged that the model itself has formidable challenges to meet. Its potential as a force for renewal in Christian mission may be measured by the extent to which it is able to meet the following challenges.

Mere Religiously Themed Tourism?

Holiday travel is a feature of the affluent lifestyle of the Western world. Long-haul flights carry the wealthy to beach resorts on every continent for rest and relaxation. Some holiday-makers are keen to explore an exotic location. Themed holidays which offer participants insights into the local situation have become increasingly popular. These can sometimes include active participation, perhaps in a project that is perceived as being of benefit to the local community. This is the economic and cultural context in which the rise of twinning as an approach to world mission has taken place. Is it therefore no more than a variant on the themed vacation for the wealthy who can perhaps salve their conscience with some good works while enjoying a foreign adventure? Samuel Escobar, a senior Latin American mission thinker, has commented on the increase of short-term mission visits: "the trend we are observing today could well undermine the long-term missionary enterprise. In the final analysis it could

become just a form of glorified tourism."¹¹ Compared with the strategy of deploying missionaries who devote a lifetime to living out the gospel of Christ in their country of service, does not the twinning approach appear trivial and insubstantial? Will it prove to be a distraction from the real task of the church in the world?

It has to be acknowledged that twinning *could* be carried out in a way that is ephemeral, dissipating substantial resources without making any lasting impact. However, there are steps that can be taken to avoid such an outcome. The first is to ensure that there is depth to the faith dimension of the twinning. This sets it in a different key to the artificiality of themed tourism. It means that people are engaging at a level that has the potential to be transformative. From such a basis the twinning can be developed in a way that has clear missionary intentionality. Rather than just offering an ephemeral experience, it is geared to bring lasting change in Christ's name – at both ends of the twinning relationship. For this to occur it is hugely advantageous if the twinning is not a stand-alone effort but rather part of a long-term, sustained and wide-ranging common commitment. Here the twinning draws strength from being embedded in a partner church relationship that has significant history and a strong ongoing commitment that is much wider and stronger than the individual strand that is represented by the twinning. Where missionary intention is built into the twinning arrangement it will not remain an internal church affair but will have elements of connection with, and outreach to, the wider community.

Western Indulgence Imposing on Non-Western Partners?

For fifty years the missionary movement has been engaged in the struggle to achieve an equal partnership in the gospel between churches based in the West and their counterparts based in the South. Yet, on the face of it, it would be difficult to argue that the move to adopt twinning as a primary means of interaction has been equally driven from both sides of the partnership. To a great extent it has been an initiative of the Western partner to which the partner in the South has felt obliged to

¹¹ Samuel Escobar, "Mission from Everywhere to Everyone: The Home Base in a New Century," www.towards2010.org.uk [26 November 2007].

respond. It has often come in a context where the Western partner has, however reluctantly, been cutting back on appointments and grants so that the move to twinning is the only remaining means of continuing a cherished relationship. By and large, there has been no active choice on the part of the Southern partner. In fact, in some cases it may have come as an unwelcome imposition. Traditions of hospitality mean that great effort is put into the reception of visitors, using time, energy and resources that are urgently needed for other work. The new arrangements also give expression to the inequality by which the relationship is marked. The twinning visit is relatively straightforward for the wealthy Westerner but much less so for their Southern counterpart. As John Hull has pertinently observed: "The iron curtain has passed away and even the bamboo curtain hardly exists, but the place has been taken by the money curtain. We in the two-seventh rich world are surrounded by a money curtain which is like a one-way mirror. It is invisible to those of us on the inside because we can see right through it, but to the poor majority outside the money curtain it stands as a glittering barrier through which they cannot pass. We can go to them but they cannot come to us. Globalisation has conquered every area of human life except people."² This harsh reality is borne out in the visa application process that makes it abundantly clear that it is much easier to move in one direction than in the other. Ease and adventure for the Westerner contrast with anxiety and frustration for the Southern partner. This imbalance is compounded by unequal access to communication technology. While the Westerner might well have easy internet access in their own home, receiving and sending emails might be an uncertain and expensive logistical exercise for the Southern partner.

It should be observed, however, that contact between those on either side of the "money curtain" may prove to be a significant lever to achieve change. Direct experience of the disparity of resources available to Western and Southern partners brings home the need for greater justice in the world economic order more powerfully than any number of statistics. In particular, Westerners who have been exposed to the harsh reali-

² John M. Hull, "Mission, Education and Globalisation," Churches Commission on Mission Annual Conference papers, Durham, Sept 2000.

ties of poverty in the South are often the people who take the lead in such initiatives for economic justice as the Jubilee 2000 debt campaign or "Make Poverty History" in 2005. By aligning themselves, through partnership, with the most excluded and most disadvantaged sections of the global community, sharing their life and speaking with them and for them, Western partners are motivated to become part of the solution and not just part of the problem in a divided world. It may be that it is active church partnership, sustained over generations and given renewed personal expression today, which can break through the invisible curtain between the "parallel worlds".

It is also empowering at a deeper level. At the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference the great Indian bishop V.S. Azariah gave expression to a profound aspiration of churches of the Global South in relation to their missionary founders: "Through all the ages to come the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for *love*. Give us FRIENDS."³ The moratorium of the 1960s expressed the same desire – not for a breaking of the relationship but for a more equal and closer partnership. Is twinning possibly the answer to the prayers of a century? Certainly, it is providing the opportunity for churches to relate to one another beyond the institutional and national leadership level by mobilising the grassroots of the churches to engage with one another. Bishop Azariah, we have heard you – we offer you love, we give you friends.

Communication Failure

A further major challenge to the twinning model is the possibility of failure at the fundamental level of communication. It might seem that this is the least of our problems. Instant worldwide communication opens up unprecedented opportunities for the twinning method to flourish. In

³ V.S. Azariah, "The Problem of Cooperation between Foreign and Native Workers," World Missionary Conference, 1910, *The History and Records of the Conference*, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, pp. 306-15 [315].

terms of the mechanics there is a great variety of possible methods of communication – email, instant messaging, telephone, mobile phone, texting, skype, video link. In most situations, one or more of these methods will be possible. However, the "digital divide" leaves many people in poorer countries lacking access to the modern communications network. Far from bringing partners closer together it is possible that the modern communication infrastructure emphasises how much they belong to different worlds.

The communication challenge, however, extends far beyond the technical aspect. Often a twinning seeks to bridge two vastly different contexts. As Jim Harries observes: "The more distant the context of communicators, the lower the level of understanding. It is hard to imagine a more distant context than between some Northern and Southern societies."⁴ Even the language with which they communicate, which might seem to provide a bond of connection, can express the gulf that is set between them: "... the use of foreign languages will always leave the foreigner in a dominant position. It will not (given the vast cultural gap between North and South) be able to accurately express Southern truths or address Southern contexts. It will severely hinder the opportunities for Northerners to learn from Southern contexts – so that as well as dominant they will be ignorant."⁵ Even the faith that is the basis of the relationship may reveal the great distance which divides the two partners. In connecting with a partner in the Global South, Western partners will find themselves engaging with new and unfamiliar expressions of faith. Philip Jenkins has pointed out that: "Southern Christianity, the Third Church, is not just a transplanted version of the familiar religion of the older Christian states: the New Christendom is no mirror image of the old. It is a truly new and developing entity."⁶ The possibility of completely misunderstanding one another is a real one.

⁴ Jim Harries, "Mission to South, Words to the North: Reflections on Communication in the Church by a Northerner in the South," *Exchange: Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research*, Vol. 36 No. 3 (2007), p. 285.

⁵ Ibid., p. 293.

⁶ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 214.

Without a deep awareness of the extent of the communication challenge it is unlikely that any twinning relationship is going to succeed. Jim Harries offers a starting point: "it would be helpful to consider the church in the South as a mystery, to be approached with humility and wonder, and not a knowing confident assumption of superior knowledge that results in an over-quick assuming of the role of 'teacher'."⁷ There is, in fact, a need to enter the twinning with the expectation that it is going to be a transformative experience. Whether or not it is possible to literally learn a new language there is need to be prepared to enter a world of understanding that is wholly different from the familiar one. As we may learn from a Czech proverb – "as often as you learn a new language, you become a new person".⁸ It is true that a twinning can easily be defeated or frustrated by the issue of communication. Yet where this challenge is met, communication opens up the path to transformation. Extraordinary journeys of personal and communal growth and discovery lie ahead.

The "Love Miles" Dilemma

Twinning thrives on contact and interaction. What better than to arrange exchange visits? These often prove to be the beating heart of a successful twinning arrangement. The aspiration of any church discovering this potential would be to encourage as many exchange visits as possible. Ironically, just as this noble aspiration has begun to take effect widely, a major new ethical consideration has registered itself. Rising environmental awareness has led to the realisation that long-haul flights are among the worst culprits in the production of the carbon emissions that are causing global warming. If we wish to be responsible global citizens we have an obligation to minimize or even eliminate our air travel. For short flights it may be not too problematic to use surface transport instead. For the long-haul flights, on which the exchange visits depend, there is no readily available substitute. This poses a serious ethical dilemma.

⁷ Jim Harries, "Mission to South, Words to the North: Reflections on Communication in the Church by a Northerner in the South," *Exchange: Journal of Missionological and Ecumenical Research*, Vol. 36 No. 3 (2007), p. 287.

⁸ Kenneth Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love: Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions 1846-1914*, London: Epworth Press, 1995, p. 107.

As George Monbiot has concluded: "... it has become plain to me that long-distance travel, high speed and the curtailment of climate change are not compatible. *If you fly, you destroy other people's lives.*"⁹ The lives, moreover, which you will destroy first are the lives of the poor who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Here is an irony: having been awakened, through involvement in a twinning, to the injustices which cause extreme poverty, you find that the flight which you took in order to bring the twinning to life has, in fact, deepened the plight of the poor. Monbiot recognises this dilemma: "The people who are most concerned about the inhabitants of other countries are often those who have travelled widely. Much of the global justice movement consists of people ... whose politics were forged by their experiences abroad.... When you form relationships with people from other nations, you accumulate love miles: the distance between your home and that of the people you love or the people they love.... Who could be surprised to discover that 'ethical' people are in denial about the impacts of flying?"¹⁰ When we talk the language of love we are talking the language of twinning. The more successful a twinning becomes, the more those involved will love one another. The more they love one another, the more they will want to make the long air journey in order to spend time with one another. The more long air journeys they make, the more damage they do to the earth's atmosphere and the more they endanger the lives of the poor and ultimately the continuation of life on earth.

Is there any way out of this Faustian dilemma? First, we might ask whether there are alternatives to air travel. Within a certain range, rail travel is possible and long-distance rail links may increase in both quality and quantity as the world responds to climate change. Presently inter-continental travel by any means other than air is not possible without a large investment of time and effort. Will we have to start making that kind of investment? Secondly, we can consider other means of achieving direct communication and building the relationships that are key to the success of a twinning. Live video links, for example, offer the opportunity

⁹ George Monbiot, *Heat: How to Stop the Planet Burning*, London: Allen Lane, 2006, p. 188.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

of interaction without any of the participants having to undertake long-distance travel. In Scotland, the use of this technology to strengthen twinnings has been pioneered by the World Without Walls initiative that has provided the equipment, training and networking to enable live interaction by digital means.¹¹ Thirdly, it can be argued that, even admitting that there must be a drastic reduction in long-distance air travel, there could be a limited lifetime allowance for each person to take a small number of flights. In the event, that some form of rationing is introduced, the question would be whether some would be willing to use their allowance for the development of a twinning. Clearly responsible citizens are going to become much more sparing in their use of long-haul flights. It may soon represent a significant sacrifice to spare a major part of our allowance for the sake of a twinning. For there can be little question that it is on the immediacy of direct human encounter that twinnings depend for their inspiration. The challenge they now have to face, in view of climate change, is to make a little go a long way.

Inter-Church Aid rather than Mission?

The twinning model is organised around two congregations in different locations forming and sustaining a relationship with one another. It might seem, to recall distinctions made in the debates of the 1950s, that it is a matter of inter-church aid rather than missionary outreach. It might appear to be about an "in-house" church activity, albeit one with wide geographical extent – two churches contributing to one another's development without any focus beyond their internal life. A study of a sample of short-term mission trips undertaken from the USA found that "3.5% of short-term missionaries travel to the least evangelized world ... with 12.5% of short-termers travelling to the somewhat evangelized ... and fully 84% of short-termers going to the 33% of the world which is most evangelized."¹² The twinning model is equally vulnerable to such imbalance, since it is driven by the need to find a "twin" with whom a strong partnership can be forged. The potential weakness here is that its energy

¹¹ See www.worldwithoutwalls.org [20 November 2007].

¹² Robert J. Priest and Joseph Paul Priest, "'They see everything, and understand nothing': Short-Term Mission and Service Learning," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXVI No. 1 (January 2008), p. 65.

can be consumed simply within the family of faith with none left for outreach to those who have yet to hear the gospel of Christ. It might appear to have no impetus to take its energy to the missionary frontier where faith meets unbelief. Where is the dynamic, built in the Christian faith, which has impelled the church to reach out to the poor, the needy and to all who have not received the good news of Jesus Christ?

If we are serious about mission we have to meet the challenge of the distinction laid down by Lesslie Newbigin: "While all the activities of the Church have a missionary *dimension*, there are needed specific activities which have the *intention* of crossing the frontier between faith and unbelief – and that frontier is no longer the old geographical one, but runs through every land."¹³ It must be acknowledged that the danger of a twinning is that it exhausts the outward looking energy of a congregation in a relationship with another church. However, there is evidence that a quite opposite dynamic can be released. The twinning can have a galvanising effect on both the congregations that are involved so that they think and act afresh in regard to mission to the surrounding community. As they challenge and enrich one another in relation to the question of the purpose of the church, an outward-looking impetus can develop. The twinning, moreover, can be developed in a way that is open and inviting to the surrounding community. In some cases, the twinning has provoked within the community a far greater interest in the life and witness of the church than had ever been apparent before. The twinning often does not stop with the church but is adopted by other community institutions, such as schools. Far from necessarily closing the church into its own internal life, a twinning can have the effect of re-igniting the missionary impetus to engage the wider community with the message that Christ is risen.

Successful twinings do not come easily. There are forces working against them that can easily prevail. Yet when the pitfalls are identified, strategies emerge which can ensure that the twinning achieves its transformative purpose. Then its missionary character and value will be beyond all question.

¹³ Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985, p. 164.

5. Releasing First-World Wealth for Global Mission: What Levers can be Pulled Today?

Introduction: Mission and Money

Anyone becoming involved in Christian mission is soon aware that a major recurrent issue is that of mobilizing the financial and material resources needed for the church's missionary engagement to proceed. Though few missionaries would think of "getting money" as their primary task, almost all have found it a function necessary to the fulfillment of their calling. Certainly, the modern missionary movement, springing from its base in the prosperous West, has constantly emphasized the need for funds to sustain and develop its many initiatives. As Jonathan Bonk acknowledges: "Without ample supplies of money not only would missionary efforts from the West be severely truncated, but, it is safe to conjecture, would virtually cease. Western strategies, beginning with the support of Western missionaries themselves, are money intensive. To deny itself access to Western affluence would be an act of suicide for the missionary movement."¹ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the apparatus of the modern missionary movement was being constructed, a significant portion of the wealth that had been generated by the industrial revolution in the West was channelled towards overseas missions. Today we have to acknowledge that significant obstacles stand in the way of such a flow of resources.

It can be argued that this is something to be welcomed as the liberation of Christian mission from its compromising alliance with Western affluence. It is nearly 100 years since Roland Allen made his celebrated case that Christian mission had been distorted by its close alliance with power and wealth in the colonial era and was creating dependent communities. He took the radical position that missionary work needed to rediscover the Pauline approach which, since it lacked earthly resources, depended on the work of the Holy Spirit.² More recently, Jonathan Bonk has argued

¹ Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1991, p. 40.

² Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods St Paul's or Ours: A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces*, London: Robert Scott, 1912.

that this aberration is coming to a close and that the agency of Christian mission is returning to where it belongs: among the poor. As Bonk remarks: "For the major part of the Church's existence it has been a necessity, and as the twentieth century draws to a close, it is increasingly clear that most missionary endeavour has been, is being, and must continue to be undertaken by missionaries from the poorest churches.... While missionaries from the affluent West get on with the expensive and complicated process of living comfortable and secure lives in a Third World context, their national counterparts take the Word and make it flesh, dwelling among peoples who see in their frail flesh the glory of a living Saviour full of grace and truth."³

Early in the 21st century it is increasingly apparent that more and more of the agents of Christian mission come from among the weak, the broken and the vulnerable. Swept by unmerciful currents of history, they bear witness to the suffering Lord in whom they find the strength to meet adversity. A new (or recovered) pattern of missionary activity is emerging in which the poor take the gospel to the rich. Nonetheless, this chapter proceeds from the pragmatic premise that no venture can be sustained without financial backing from somewhere or other. Since, regrettably, wealth is concentrated in the first world, there is still much to be gained if some of this wealth can be deployed in support of Christian mission worldwide. Even in a day when they can no longer claim to be the "centre of gravity" in world Christianity, there is still much to be said for the churches in the prosperous Western world putting their resources at the service of worldwide Christian mission. We have to recognise, however, that major obstacles stand in the path of such a flow of resources.

Church Decline in the West

First, we cannot escape the decline of the "mainline" churches in the West that in the 19th and 20th centuries were significant engines of the global missionary movement. Scotland provides a case in point. A century ago it could be claimed that Scotland had sent more missionaries overseas per head of population than any other country in the world. They served with many different agencies but many went out under the auspi-

³ Jonathan Bonk, *Missions and Money*, pp. 113, 14.

ces of the Presbyterian churches, which adopted foreign mission as something integral to their identity. Today the Presbyterian faith seems to have lost its grip upon the Scottish imagination. A Church Census was undertaken in 1984, in 1994 and again in 2002. So it is possible to set out current trends with a reasonable degree of objectivity. On the day of the Census in 1984, 853,700 people attended a church service, in 1994 the total was 691,120 and in 2002 it was 570,130 – just 11.2% of the population.⁴ This represents a decline in church attendance of 19% in the ten years between 1984 and 1994 and a decline of 18% in the eight years between 1994 and 2002. Between 1984 and 1994 the average annual decline was 2.1% while between 1994 and 2002 it increased to 2.4%, indicating that the rate of decline in church attendance is accelerating. The membership of the Church of Scotland, the national church, has been declining by between 15,000 and 19,000 per year since the 1960s. Its Board of National Mission has pointed out that: "It is projected that if this continues the Church of Scotland, as we know it today, will have ceased to exist by the year 2050".⁵

As discussed in Chapter 1, the social historian Callum Brown has found it appropriate to speak of the "death of Christian Britain". Surveying the wider Western European scene, Reinhard Hempelmann observes that: "We talk about 'inculturation' when the gospel finds a place in a certain cultural context. In our society today, Christian faith is in a stage of 'ex-culturation'".⁶ These voices, among many others, suggest that we are entering a period when Christian faith has become peripheral, sectarian, and irrelevant to the construction of reality in which the European population is engaged. Even allowing for a degree of overstatement among its critics, it is difficult to dispute the reality of abrupt church decline or to doubt that the historic base of the modern missionary movement is being rapidly eroded.

⁴ Peter Brierley, *Turning the Tide: The Challenge Ahead*, Report of the 2002 Scottish Church Census, London: Christian Research, 2003, pp. 15-16.

⁵ *Reports to the Church of Scotland General Assembly 2002*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 2002, p. 20/6.

⁶ Reinhard Hempelmann, "The Context of Christian Witness in the 21st Century," *International Review of Mission* XCII (2003), pp. 45-55 [47].

A New Parochialism

The problem is deepened when we consider the response of the mainline churches to this reversal in their fortunes. All too easily, a survival mentality emerges which concentrates energy and resources on the domestic at the expense of the international involvement of the church. Indeed, when diminishing resources lead to the inevitable prioritisation exercise, it tends to be a "maintenance" model that emerges with missionary outreach being sidelined. In affluent societies feeling threatened by the surrounding poverty-stricken masses and marked by rising xenophobia, it is all too easy for churches to become caught up in the prevailing fortress mentality. In an individualised culture where national institutions are regarded with cynicism and suspicion, it is tempting for the church to concentrate entirely on its local expression and to sit light to responsibilities at national and international level. In a survey of giving patterns in mainline Protestant and evangelical churches, John and Sylvia Ronsvalle discovered that giving for benevolent causes (anything beyond the inner life of the congregation) decreased by more than one third between 1969 and 1993.⁷ The more such a parochial outlook comes to prevail, the greater the obstacle to the flow of first-world wealth to the support of Christian mission worldwide.

A Consumerist Lifestyle

One of the ironies which has to be faced by any Western Christian mission agency finding it more difficult to raise funds for its work is that the society in which it operates is more affluent than ever before. With the growing affluence, however, has come the consumerist lifestyle believed to fuel economic growth. Citizens are convinced that they need ever more varied and sophisticated goods and services. Shopping becomes a way of life for many. It has become quite acceptable to go deeply into debt in order to acquire the consumer goods deemed to be necessary. In June 2004 it was announced that consumer debt in the UK had reached one trillion pounds for the first time, with the average family owing

⁷ John Ronsvalle and Sylvia Ronsvalle, *Behind the Stained Glass Windows: Money Dynamics in the Church*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996, cit. Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions*, p. 19.

£5,000. It is very difficult to live in the West without conceding at least to some extent to the demands of the consumerist culture. Hence even though church members have a larger disposable income than ever before, it is almost all required to sustain the consumer lifestyle. Increasingly, their energies and resources may be absorbed by the overriding requirement to service their debts. Clearly such a climate is inimical to the releasing of significant funds to support missionary enterprise in frontier situations.

Project Orientation

A further limiting factor is that even people who give generously of their resources for missionary purposes are increasingly looking for a project-oriented approach and for reasonably rapid and measurable results. A recent survey of patterns of financial giving suggested that people aged 55 and above tend to give to institutions, people aged between 35 and 55 tend to give to people, and those aged under 35 tend to give to projects.⁸ Well-defined projects with clear objectives and transparent lines of accountability have much to commend them. Yet for institutions such as missionary societies or church mission boards, which need a constant flow of financial support to sustain their work, this approach presents a considerable challenge. Through the years it has been apparent that often the missionary work which has proved most fruitful in the long term has passed through periods when it appeared to be producing very few positive results. There is therefore need for financial support which is based on a longer view and which will be sustained through barren times as well as fruitful times. This is difficult to achieve when everything is oriented to short-term projects.

Soteriological Relativism

Theological changes also play a role. At the height of the Western missionary movement a great deal of motivation and financial giving was predicated on the conviction that those who had not received Jesus Christ were eternally lost. Today within mainline Western churches there

⁸ Gary McIntosh, *Making Room for the Boom, or Bust: Six Models for Reaching Three Generations*, New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1997.

are a variety of positions on the question of the fate of those who have not professed faith in Christ. By and large, however, there are few in the leadership or membership of the churches who can match the dogmatic certainty with which the question was considered in the movement of faith that was generated by the Evangelical Revival of the 18th and 19th centuries. Again, the cultural change underlying this trend is deep and pervasive. As William Bloom remarks, "We are in changing times and today, for many people, religious certainty does not seem such an attractive option. This is not just a matter of aesthetics. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of psychology or emotional intelligence recognizes that people with a fundamentalist certainty about their ideas – those who are not open to listening to or respecting other viewpoints – are either ignorant or insecure. Rigid conviction is no longer seen as an admirable role model for leadership. A monolithic belief seems primitive and oppressive. It is a cultural dinosaur."⁹ While recognising that today's tolerance of diversity is a healthy trend in many respects, Engel and Dyrness warn that "there is a real danger that the historical doctrinal foundations of Christianity may be weakened in an atmosphere of tolerance."¹⁰

Of course, mission is a many-sided reality and its underpinning theology has many different strands. The way in which the rationale for mission has been understood has varied widely over the centuries, as David Bosch has comprehensively demonstrated.¹¹ Nonetheless, the "saving the lost" paradigm which was widely used in the early stages of the modern missionary movement has the virtue of simplicity and allowed the appeal for funds to be stated straightforwardly. The more complex and equivocal rationale for mission prevailing in mainstream Western churches today leaves it much less clear whether there is any high level of responsibility resting upon the ordinary church member. In particular, at popular level, there is a real possibility that soteriological relativism

⁹ William Bloom, *Holistic Revolution*, London: Penguin, 2000, cit. Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen, "New Spirituality and the Crisis in European Churches and Cultures," *Swedish Missiological Themes* 90 (2002), pp. 449-65 [455].

¹⁰ Engel & Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions*, p. 19.

¹¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991, pp. 181-345.

can cut the nerve of missionary enthusiasm. As the Scottish missionary Donald Fraser once remarked in this connection: "vagueness does not increase the temperature".¹²

More Sophisticated Models of Mission

In the heyday of the modern missionary movement, the guiding idea was a fairly simple one. "We" enjoyed the blessing of the gospel and the advantages of a superior civilization and we had an obligation to share it with "them" – the benighted savages in the distant lands across the sea. The missionaries who risked life and limb in order to carry out this mission of mercy were heroic figures and it behoved everyone to offer whatever support they could. It has been described in Scotland as the "oor Jock" ("our John") approach to mission. Jock has gone to carry out missionary work in some distant land and, because he is one of us, it is our duty to support him spiritually and financially. We can follow Jock's exploits by letter and, from time to time, he comes on furlough and makes a personal visit. It is a simple, personal, uncomplicated, unthreatening model. It affirms who we are and upholds the value of all that we hold dear. It readily draws forth our financial support since it so directly represents our identity and spreads our influence.

Today, by contrast, the talk is of partnership, of mutual exchange and interaction.¹³ The local church is responsible for its own affairs. "Oor Jock" has a much more subsidiary role. Indeed, eventually there seems to be no need for him at all. The mission engagement is no longer something we control. Rather it seems that the control has been ceded to others and it is difficult to understand what are its direction and purpose. Or, it may be that the mission is carried out by a united church or an ecumenical institution. These seem even more remote. It is no longer our flag that is flying over the mission and so it is no longer at all obvious why we should muster our energy and resources to give it support. Mission

¹² Donald Fraser, Moderatorial Address, United Free Church of Scotland Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly, Edinburgh: United Free Church of Scotland, 1922, pp. 32-44 [42].

¹³ See e.g. Andrew J. Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1999, pp. 184-204.

engagement tends to be effective only when it flows from passionate conviction. Whatever the virtues of more sophisticated models of mission, on the whole they are not conducive to engendering the passion on which financial generosity depends.

Levers to Pull

Clearly there are formidable forces impeding a flow of funds from the wealthy Western world to resource missionary endeavour worldwide. Are there ways of releasing energy sufficient to overcome these obstacles? Can we identify levers that can be pulled today?

The Great Commission: An Uncancelled Mandate

So long as Christians come to the last chapter of Matthew's Gospel and read the concluding words of Jesus "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19), there will be a lever with which worldwide mission may be energised. It brings to any believing Christian community that takes its foundational texts seriously the sense of obedience, of being under obligation, of being commissioned, of being sent with a very particular task to fulfil. Of course, many things have changed since the high tide of the modern missionary movement from the West but the great commission remains within the foundations of the Christian faith to bring afresh its challenge to each generation, whatever its circumstances might be. It is, in the words of John Taylor, an "uncancelled mandate".¹⁴ His choice of phrase is revealing in that it indicates apparently some question about whether or not the mandate has been cancelled. Writing at the close of the 20th century Taylor was correct in detecting the salience of such a question. He demonstrates that, of course, there has been no cancellation. Every generation of Christians has the mandate to work through their discipleship in terms of what it means not just for their own locality but also for "all nations". "Our mission," writes Taylor, "which is still essentially Christ's mission, in adapting to the new features of the world situation, can best be guided, not by *ad hoc* tactical reactions to events, but by reference back to that unchanging purpose which the mission is meant to serve." It is always possible to recall the church to its

¹⁴ John V. Taylor, *The Uncancelled Mandate*, London: Church House, 1998.

global horizons and its universal responsibility. This constitutive element of Christian faith provides a lever that can still be used to instil and renew a sense of obligation that extends to the use of resources for the support of Christian mission worldwide.¹⁵

Justice for the Poor

Another point of connection with contemporary congregations lies in the area of justice for the poor. The great conundrum of the globalization of our time is that it seems infallibly to make the rich richer but the poor poorer. Despite all the fine words of churches, civil society and governments in the powerful world of the north, it remains the case that:

- 1.2 billion people are living on less than a dollar a day – described by Jon Sobrino as a "macro-blasphemy".
- for every 1\$ of economic aid that flows from the north to Africa, \$1.60 flows in the opposite direction to Western banks in the form of debt servicing.
- While the British economy grew at around 3% per annum during the 1990s, 19 African countries had negative growth rates for the whole decade. The World Bank admits: "the distribution of the gains of globalisation has been extraordinarily unequal". In other words, poor countries are becoming poorer.
- Trade rules are fixed in ways which ensure that the rich continue to benefit at the expense of the poor.
- The physical environment of the poorest sections of the human community is deteriorating to the extent that recovery is becoming ever more difficult
- The unprecedented and catastrophic impact of HIV/AIDS is concentrated on the poorest people in the poorest countries of the world.

¹⁵ See Michael Griffiths, *A Task Unfinished*, Crowborough: MARC & OMF International, 1996.

- In the conflict situations widely prevailing in the Third World today, it is the poorest members of the community who most commonly lose their lives, limbs or livelihoods.
- It is also the poorest and most vulnerable who are hardest hit by the devastating effects of climate change.

Impassioned pressure groups and enlightened politicians are alive to the scandal presented by these realities. Many people of conscience are outraged and convinced that action must be taken. For Christians there is also the faith dimension. Among those suffering the effects of deepening poverty are many fellow members of the church of Jesus Christ. It is possible to point out that in the body of Christ "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it" (I Corinthians 12:26) and to deduce our obligation to respond. A prophetic voice of protest surely must be raised. But the Christian response to global poverty must involve more than words. Confessing faith in the oneness of the church, there is the need to *be there*, the need to be present. There is the need to maintain person-to-person, community-to-community, face-to-face relationships. Since it is through active Christian mission that this takes effect, there is a lever here that can be used to raise a sense of financial obligation. Alan Lewis has posed the question: "Required to reduce budgets, redeploy staff, and abridge programmes locally and nationally, will the churches give priority to salvaging the dreams and expectations of the comfortable, the powerful and the affluent? Or will they seize this historical moment and commit themselves to new forms and strategies for mission which concentrate resources upon society's peripheral minorities, those on the boundaries of the polis where pain and need and a sense of impotence and hopelessness are greatest?"¹⁶

Catholicity and Mutuality

The cries of those threatened by poverty and violence evoke a response from every compassionate person. What is distinctive to the Church, is that these cries reach to the heart of her identity. The call for solidarity, far from being an unwelcome interruption to the core work of the

¹⁶ Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Church, resonates with her sense of her primary purpose. Biblical phrases such as the body of Christ and the household of God remind the church time and again of its oneness. It is its relationships with sisters and brothers near and far which constitute its identity.¹⁷ It is through an active catholicity and mutuality that the being of the church comes to expression. At the same time, experience shows that it is easy for the church to overlook this dimension of its life if it is not given a clear and distinct place at all levels of church life.

Among the surprises of God's grace is the experience of Western churches that have become part of a global movement of faith over the past two or three centuries. Without losing their commitment to their own communities, they have been involved in witnessing to Jesus Christ and nurturing Christian communities far beyond the West. As a result, they find themselves part of a worldwide network of relationships sustained not only by a common confession of faith in Christ but by a lived experience of struggling together to be true to Jesus in face of the challenges presented over the years.

"Partnership" is the term often used with reference to these relationships. Yet it is an inadequate term to describe the *koinonia* within which churches find their life. Many churches prefer to describe the Western church from which they spring as their "mother church" but, while the sense of family is welcome, Western churches have felt that it is important to express the equality of church-to-church relationships and to move beyond a parent-child analogy that might have made sense in earlier days. Here the language of partnership has its value but it carries the danger that the "partner" comes to be viewed as distant and external to the real core of the church's life and work. Andrew Kirk has offered this definition: "Partnership is not so much what the Church *does* as what it *is*. Churches (theologically) belong to one another, for God has called each 'into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.'"¹⁸ Given that the Church finds its life not in isolation but within a web of

¹⁷ See Paul S. Minnear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, London: Lutterworth, 1961.

¹⁸ Andrew J. Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1999, p. 187.

relationships which spans the world, when it faces resourcing questions it always has to ask not only about its own domestic situation but also about the situation of its partners elsewhere. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:4).

In sub-Saharan Africa and many parts of Asia, the combination of the HIV/AIDS pandemic with growing poverty has created a situation where churches face all the pressures of unprecedented social crisis. The presence, the understanding, the accompaniment and the practical assistance of Western partners has a value beyond what words can express. There is no substitute for the exchange of personnel as a demonstration of our active care, concern and solidarity. The escalating conflict in the Middle East similarly calls us to be present offering prayerful and practical solidarity. What is required of Western churches in this context, when it comes to prioritisation and allocation of resources, is to take account of what their overseas partners are facing as well as their own situation. Listening to the cry of their partners and taking it to the heart of their planning is an essential element in their Christian discipleship. Their calling is to demonstrate the kind of intention, passion and commitment that Paul showed in his determination to organise a collection that would relieve the needs of the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-29). "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

Local Initiative and Direct Involvement

Amongst the cultural changes noted above is the growing distrust of large national institutions and the increasing tendency to invest energy and resources in local networks. Church Mission Boards have to recognise that their 20th century "centralist" way of working is unlikely to be viable in the 21st and to look at ways of working based much more on congregational initiative. This may be very inconvenient for Mission Boards which have been long accustomed to highly centralised ways of working but it may be in adapting to working with local initiative and direct involvement of church members that the lever is to be found which will produce the support needed for a new generation of missionary engagement. Stanley Green indicates what this has involved for North American Mennonites over the past few years: "We needed to be

willing to adapt our self-identity from that of a centralized bureaucracy that 'owned' the mission (we designed the initiatives, recruited the workers, deployed the personnel, and then courted and cajoled congregations to support our program) to a more decentralized, networking entity focused on developing synergistic partnerships with regional ... conferences, congregations, and international partners."¹⁹

Perhaps the most marked feature of this paradigm shift is that the missionary enterprise ceases to be the project of a tightly-knit core of dedicated professionals who make a career of it; and becomes an open-ended venture in which large numbers of people can enjoy direct participation for longer and shorter periods. As people become involved so their financial support will be mobilised. For Mission Boards this means that they need to develop a new chemistry in which they function as an essential resource for local congregations developing their involvement in God's mission worldwide. If they can conceive missionary initiatives that spark the imagination and get people directly involved, then the lever will be there to release the needed funds.

Conclusion

It is admittedly debatable whether substantial funding from first-world sources is to the advantage of worldwide Christian mission. Yet a strong case can be made for the strategic and sensitive deployment of such funds. It is therefore a matter of some concern that formidable obstacles stand in the path of such a flow of resources. Church decline in the West, a new parochialism, a consumerist lifestyle, project orientation, soteriological relativism and more sophisticated models of mission are some of the forces which have acted to reduce Western financial support for cross-cultural mission worldwide. Nonetheless there are levers, both old and new, which can be pulled to revive and consolidate such support. The uncanceled mandate of the Great Commission, the cry for justice for the poor, the appeal of catholicity and mutuality and the potential of local initiative and direct involvement of local church members are some of the levers which can propel renewed support for Christian mission

¹⁹ Stanley W. Green, "How Mennonites Repositioned a Traditional Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 23/4 (October 1999), p. 162.

worldwide. Many missionary initiatives will stand or fall depending on how effectively these levers can be pulled.

6. The HIV/AIDS Pandemic: What is at Stake for Christian Mission?

Introduction

The scale of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is such that a great deal is at stake in many fields – health, politics, economics, development, industry, culture. It would be surprising if the mission of the church did not require some rethinking and reshaping. Any assessment of the context in which Christian mission operates today has to reckon with the spread of an epidemic which is destroying human lives and societies at an unprecedented rate. What confession of faith is called for in such circumstances? What direction should missionary engagement take? What rethinking of priorities is required? David Bosch has successfully made the case that the church's understanding of mission undergoes paradigm shifts from time to time.¹ The shape and character of Christian mission has changed as different circumstances have arisen and as the churches' thinking has developed. This essay suggests some points at which our understanding of Christian mission may have to be significantly reshaped as churches respond to the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. If HIV/AIDS turns out to be one of the defining features of this generation, what paradigm will be required to express the meaning of Christian mission?

Humanity at Stake – Justice and Compassion

The statistics that delineate the scale of the pandemic have become wearingly familiar. At the end of 2002 the United Nations AIDS Programme and the World Health Organisation estimated that 5 million people had been infected during the year, bringing the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS to 42 million. 3.1 million died of AIDS in 2002. At that time it was expected that a further 45 million would be infected between 2002 and 2010.² The number of fatalities demonstrates at once the scale and seriousness of the pandemic. What is often less immediately apparent is the impact of the loss of this (mostly young)

¹ See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.

² UNAIDS/WHO, *AIDS Update*, December 2002.

life on society as a whole. "It is possible that, in retrospect," writes Alex de Waal, "economic historians will explain Africa's perplexing failure to develop from the late 1990s onwards as due primarily to the as yet unrecognised influence of HIV/AIDS."³ Moreover, there could be much worse to come - with demographic, economic and governance regression leading to "complete social collapse".⁴ Already there are signs that such an outcome may not be too far away. Stephen Lewis, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, remarked, following his visit to southern Africa in late 2002:

we were witnessing the grinding down of a society. We've all imagined the catastrophe but no one wanted to believe that it could happen. The fact that the agricultural sector is beginning to decay could simply be a harbinger of worse to come. My own sense is that education is on the brink.... Teachers were dead, teachers were dying, teachers were ill and away from school, children, especially girls, were being taken out of school to tend to sick and dying parents, children who had lost their parents to AIDS weren't in school because they couldn't afford the school fees.... In Zambia, they lost 1,967 teachers in 2001, over two thousand teachers in 2002; the Teachers' Colleges are graduating fewer than one thousand a year."⁵

In such a context AIDS becomes a defining issue for everyone, whether or not they themselves are HIV-positive. Tinyiko Maluleke has written: "HIV/AIDS is not just a virus that afflicts individual human bodies. It is a condition of life – a condition in which millions of Africans find themselves whether their individual bodies are HIV positive or not. In this condition, people live in fear, suspicion and great insecurity."⁶

³ Alex de Waal, "How Will HIV/AIDS Transform African Governance?" *African Affairs*, Vol. 103 (2003), p. 23.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Stephen Lewis, "The Lack of Funding for HIV/AIDS is Mass Murder by Complicity," press briefing, United Nations, New York, 8 January 2003.

⁶ Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "The Challenge of HIV/AIDS for Theological Education in Africa: Towards an HIV/AIDS Sensitive Curriculum," *Missionalia* Vol. 29/2 (August 2001), p. 138.

A crisis on this scale is a crisis for the whole of humanity. Every one of us is implicated in it, whether we like it or not. Everyone has played a part in creating the conditions in which the epidemic spreads. Everyone suffers as the human community loses so many of its young, creative and productive members. Everyone is at risk of being infected – though the level of risk varies greatly. Everyone faces the questions about what it means to be human which are raised by the onset of the pandemic. When, therefore, one addresses the issue of AIDS from a church or a mission perspective, one needs to be aware that one is joining a conversation in which there is a very wide range of participants. If there are elements of mission studies which form a specialised field occupied exclusively by mission theorists, then AIDS is not one of them. At the level of practice, anyone engaging with the issues from a Christian perspective will find themselves alongside others who may be operating from quite different perspectives. It is a field that lends itself to the forging of alliances, to the making of coalitions – in some cases with surprising and unexpected partners. Mission engagement in this field requires the humility that is ready to listen to others and to join with them when shared action is indicated as the most fruitful way forward. Two issues on which a wide range of actors have been able to raise a common voice are the organisation of the international economy and the availability of antiretroviral drugs.

When Stephen Lewis met with a group of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Lusaka in December 2002, they told him: "The HIV/AIDS crisis is not a crisis of lack of resources. It is a crisis of lack of conscience. It is the obscene gap between the haves and the have-nots that is driving this holocaust..."⁷ Convinced by this analysis Lewis returned to New York to describe the lack of funding for the fight against HIV/AIDS as "mass murder by complacency".⁸ The harsh reality is that African communities are struggling to cope with the effects of HIV/AIDS at a time when average per capita health budget in sub-Saharan Africa has declined to just over

⁷ Stephen Lewis, "The Lack of Funding for HIV/AIDS is Mass Murder by Complacency," press briefing, United Nations, New York, 8 January 2003.

⁸ Ibid.

£4.00 per annum.⁹ Those who are bearing the brunt of the impact of the disease are those with least resources to address it. So far little has been done to redress this situation. As Christian Aid has pointed out: "the UK spends more on peanuts than it does on AIDS. UK aid for HIV/AIDS (in health and other sectors) was £150 million in 2000/01. UK consumer spending on peanuts is £210 million a year."¹⁰

Remedial action can be taken, as has been strongly advocated through Jubilee 2000 and related campaigns, to liberate poor countries from the burden of unpayable international debt. The United Nations estimates that for 17 countries in Africa the costs of providing basic prevention and care for HIV/AIDS amount to \$1.4 billion a year: exactly what these countries will spend to service debts. Funds are diverted from the delivery of basic health and educational services to service the debts owed to wealthy nations. In some countries, more is being spent on debt service than on health. If it was clear before that the burden of unpayable international debt is immoral, then the reality that the countries hardest hit by HIV/AIDS are often those caught in the debt trap, makes the case still more urgently. Besides debt cancellation, there is now a greater need than ever for rich countries to take firm steps towards meeting the UN target of 0.7% of the GNP being dedicated to international development. In particular, a realistic level of contribution from the wealthier countries to the United Nations Global Health Fund is another imperative of our time. While the UN asked its member countries to contribute \$6.5 billion in 2003 for prevention, care and support programmes to fight AIDS, TB and malaria, the reality is that in the entire 2000-2003 period the UN received a total of only \$2.1 billion.¹¹

The gap between the rich and poor worlds is particularly cruelly apparent when it comes to the question of access to antiretroviral drugs. A *Guardian* supplement on AIDS in February 2003 told the story of Grace, a 30-

⁹ World Bank, *Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?* Washington DC: World Bank, 2000.

¹⁰ Christian Aid, "Fighting AIDS with Peanuts: A Year into the Life of the Global Health Fund," London: Christian Aid, July 2002, p. 1.

¹¹ "Where is the Morality in Spending \$100bn on War in Iraq and not a penny on Aids in Africa?" leader in *Sunday Herald*, 24 February 2003.

year old Malawian woman who faces imminent death through AIDS and pointed out that, "If she were living in a bedsit in Clapham on the fringes of central London instead of a bedsit in Mwenyekondo, just outside the old town of Malawi's capital, Grace would not have to face the downhill dance to death. She would see her GP, who would send her to a consultant, who would put her on antiretroviral drugs. Three drugs in combination, taken every day for the rest of her life or until such time as the scientists find a cure for AIDS, would keep her alive, active, healthy and working."¹² Even with recent price cuts, antiretroviral drugs remain unaffordable for the vast majority of people in "the south". In many poor countries, not only are the drugs unaffordable, but the back-up health services required for their safe use are not in place. In some cases, the cost of saving lives is very small. One quarter to one third of babies born to infected mothers are HIV-positive. Cheap ways of reducing this transmission are now available, by providing drugs like nevirapine (which can cut mother-to-child transmission by a half for just £2.50 per treatment).

Bringing pressure to bear on governments, drug companies, and international organisations in order to increase availability of these drugs, and to ensure the medical infrastructure for their safe delivery, is a key plank in the strategy to combat AIDS. "Here is what the world needs," wrote Donald Berwick in a startling *Washington Post* editorial, "free anti-AIDS medicines. The devastated nations of the world need AIDS medicines at no cost at all, or, at a bare minimum, medicines available at exactly their marginal costs of manufacture, not loaded at all with indirect costs or amortized costs of development. No hand-waving or accounting manoeuvres – for all practical purposes, free. Here is how it could happen: the board chairs and executives of the world's leading drug companies decide to do it, period."¹³ Recognition of the altered world health situation brought about by the advent of HIV/AIDS must lead to a firm commitment to radical action. Advocacy to secure such an outcome is a

¹² "Saving Grace," supplement, *The Guardian*, 18 February 2003.

¹³ D.M. Berwick, "We all have AIDS," editorial, *Washington Post*, 26 June 2001. See further Donald Berwick, "'We all have AIDS': case for reducing the cost of HIV drugs to zero," *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 324, 26 January 2002, pp. 214-16.

calling in which the church has a vital part to play. Yet it is a calling which the church will best fulfil by forging alliances and forming coalitions that bring together a wide range of social actors united in their commitment to counter the epidemic for the sake of humanity.

The Church at Stake – New Frontiers for Faith

A concern for justice and compassion can unite people on the basis of a shared humanity and the Christian community can play its full part in common advocacy and action that may result. At the same time, there are elements in the roots of Christian faith that give shape to the particular engagement which the churches offer. Nothing is more fundamental in the gospels than the love imperative. Asked which is *the* most important commandment, Jesus' reply makes it clear that the first and second are inseparable. To love God is to share in God's unconditional love for humankind. When we relate to our "neighbour," whether near at hand or far away, we are subject to Jesus' command: "love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:17). It is in this context that our relationship to the individuals, communities and churches most affected by the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic must be understood. As Bryant Myers has declared: "This pandemic is the acid test of our faithfulness to God's demand that we love our neighbour. How we respond to this plague answers the question of how much value we place on human life."¹⁴

In the church we proclaim ourselves members together of the body of Christ and "if one part suffers, every other part suffers with it".¹⁵ In the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, it means that no member of the church can be unaffected as so many brothers and sisters are infected with the virus. If one has AIDS, we all have AIDS. The virus has infected our body. It is a crisis that involves the whole membership of the church. We therefore cannot look on HIV/AIDS as "someone else's problem". It is an issue that demands the attention of every church member.

For many churches this will involve repenting of the silence and stigmatisation that have characterised their approach to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

¹⁴ Bryant Myers, "Africa and HIV/AIDS: Who is my Sister, my Brother?," *MARC Newsletter*, Monrovia: World Vision, November 2002, p. 4.

¹⁵ I Corinthians 12:26.

Meeting in Nairobi in May 2002, Lutheran Church leaders admitted that there has been discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS and that, "our churches have not always been safe or welcoming places. In some cases, Holy Communion has been refused to people living with HIV/AIDS, funerals of people having died from AIDS have been denied and comfort to the bereaved has not been given. We repent of these sins."¹⁶ The Lutheran leaders vowed, however, to "put our words into deeds following the example of Jesus Christ by making our churches safe places of support and community for those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS".¹⁷

It has to be acknowledged, however, that the church has usually found it very difficult to name the issues raised by HIV/AIDS. In particular, the whole area of sexual health and fulfilment is one which has tended to be excluded from the worship and teaching of the church. Participants at a Global Consultation on the Ecumenical Response to the Challenge of HIV/AIDS in Africa held in Nairobi in November 2001 observed that:

As the pandemic has unfolded, it has exposed fault lines that reach to the heart of our theology, our ethics, our liturgy and our practice of ministry. Today, churches are being obliged to acknowledge that we have – however unwittingly – contributed actively and passively to the spread of the virus. Our difficulty in addressing issues of sex and sexuality has often made it painful for us to engage, in any honest and realistic way, with issues of sex education and HIV prevention. Our tendency to exclude others, our interpretation of the scriptures and our theology of sin have all combined to promote the stigmatisation, exclusion and suffering of people with HIV or AIDS. This has undermined the effectiveness of care, education and prevention efforts and inflicted additional suffering on those already affected by the HIV. Given the extreme urgency of the situation, and the conviction that the churches do have a distinctive role to play in the response to the epidemic, what

¹⁶ "African Lutheran leaders confess past sins in dealing with HIV/AIDS," World Council of Churches, Ecumenical News International Daily News Service, 8 May 2002.

¹⁷ Ibid.

is needed is a rethinking of our mission, and the transformation of our structures and ways of working.¹⁸

As such concerns register themselves, new concepts, new vocabulary and new emphases are to be expected in Christian worship, teaching and mission outreach. In particular, the sexual dimension of life requires to be given consideration with an unprecedented degree of openness.

Another area where fresh thinking is required is in the equation of AIDS with sin. The immediate reaction of many Christians has been to identify AIDS with sin and to regard it as something from which they should distance themselves. It is plain, however, that an individualistic and moralistic approach is inadequate when it comes to accounting for all that AIDS involves. Of course, individual choices and individual behaviour are critically important. But infection with HIV is by no means always a matter of personal fault. Many women, for example, have contracted HIV through being raped in time of war. The prevalence of sexual violence in many societies means that many of those living with AIDS are "sinned against rather than sinning". It also has to be acknowledged that those who live in countries which benefit from arms sales to war-torn nations or which extract debt repayments from poor countries regardless of the economic disintegration which may result, bear some responsibility for the creation of the conditions in which AIDS spreads. The church's proper approach to anyone living with HIV/AIDS is not to suspect some particular individual guilt but rather to recognise that we share a human life that is subject to corruption and where our health at any time can be subject to disintegration. To be facing death as a result of AIDS is not to be in a position of lonely guilt nor to deserve to be stigmatised and abandoned. The forces of sin and death that are evident in the spread of AIDS are the very forces to which every human being is subject. The church is the place where we come together as sinners to seek together the hope of redemption.

This engagement at depth with the issues of belief and culture that shape behaviour in ways which either increase or resist the spread of HIV/AIDS, may be a key to making progress in the fight against the pandemic. As

¹⁸ "Plan of Action: The Ecumenical Response to HIV/AIDS in Africa," World Council of Churches Global Consultation on the Ecumenical Response to the Challenge of HIV/AIDS in Africa," Nairobi, Kenya, 25-28 November 2001, p. 2.

Laurenti Magesa has written: "Any effective change begins with addressing people's worldview. In the case of HIV/AIDS in Africa, this appears to be the approach that could achieve results, a healing from the roots."¹⁹ This is a new frontier for faith, a new place for the church to go. It will require a rethinking of the meaning of the faith as it meets a new reality. Walking the path of discipleship through the age of the HIV/AIDS pandemic gives the church an opportunity to discover more of "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ".²⁰

Gender at Stake: Sexual Power and Politics

Nowhere is this more marked than in the sensitive areas of gender and sexual behaviour. As Musa Dube has argued: "Prevention of HIV/AIDS is not as easy as abstain and be faithful. Rather, it is also about dealing with cultural structures that empower male gender over the female gender in our families, churches and societies."²¹ Similarly Beverley Haddad has observed: "The church can no longer assert to be the moral watchdog of society without challenging men to take responsibility for their sexual behaviour. Issues of gender violence, HIV/AIDS, and the links between the two cannot be dealt with without addressing men's abuse of power in relating to women, and dare I suggest without addressing the abuse of power within the structures of the church."²²

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is asking profound questions of church and mission. Before convincing answers can be found it will be necessary for the church to address issues of gender and sexual behaviour that might be

¹⁹ Laurenti Magesa, "Taking Culture Seriously: Recognizing the Reality of African Religion in Tanzania," in James F. Keenan ed., *Catholic Ethicists on HIV/AIDS*, New York & London: Continuum, 2000, pp. 76-84; cit. Christoph Benn, "The Influence of Cultural and Religious Frameworks on the Future Course of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 113 (July 2002), p. 11.

²⁰ Ephesians 3:18.

²¹ Musa W. Dube, "Preaching to the Converted: Unsettling the Christian Church!," *Ministerial Formation*, Geneva: WCC, Vol. 93 (April 2001), p. 44.

²² Beverley Haddad, "Gender Violence and HIV/AIDS: A Deadly Silence in the Church," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol. 114 (November 2002), p. 98.

very uncomfortable. Gender-based power leads to sexual behaviour that makes women and girls particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In many societies women face male power which restricts their capacity to protect their sexual health. They are not expected or permitted to exercise choice in regard to when, how and with whom to have sex. Tragically many women have "died of trust," infected with HIV by their husbands whom they mistakenly believed to be faithful sexual partners. To make matters worse, it has been shown that the position of women is even more hazardous than that of men since they have a particular biological vulnerability to the virus.

The increase in sexual violence and rape carries particular terror in the context of large-scale incidence of HIV/AIDS. Beverley Haddad reports that a woman is raped every 17 seconds in South Africa.²³ There is also significant evidence of increasing incidence of child rape,²⁴ apparently based on a myth that HIV/AIDS can be cured by having sex with a very young girl.²⁵ Stephen Lewis, after his visit to southern Africa in late 2002, comments:

One of the saddest manifestations of a society coming apart at the seams, is the growing rate of sexual abuse of children and adolescents. I was frankly jolted by what we were told. Whether it was the plight of orphans in the mountains of Lesotho, or outreach workers telling gruesome stories, sotto voce, as we travelled in Zimbabwe, or the evidence we absorbed in Zambia, there seems little doubt that sexual assaults on children have reached shocking proportions.... The Director of the YWCA in Zambia told us that cases of sexual violation of children, reported to the Lusaka YWCA clinic, numbered 23 in 1998; 77 in 1999; 88

²³ Beverley Haddad, "Gender Violence and HIV/AIDS: A Deadly Silence in the Church," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol. 114 (Nov. 2002), p. 94.

²⁴ See Puleng Lenka-Bula, "From the Womb into a Hostile World: Christian Ethics and Sexual Abuse against Children in South Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol. 114 (November 2002), pp. 55-68.

²⁵ See Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala, "Infect one, Infect all: Zulu Youth's Response to the AIDS epidemic in South Africa," *Medical Anthropology*, Vol 17 (1997), pp. 363-380; cit. Beverley Haddad, "Gender Violence and HIV/AIDS: A Deadly Silence in the Church," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol. 114 (Nov. 2002), pp. 96-97.

in 2000; 110 in 2001; 152 in the first ten months of 2002. And that's just in one of eleven clinics, and only the reported cases.... There's something deeply, deeply wrong when children are the frequent victims of adult sexual violence.²⁶

Such evidence urgently raises the question of the need for men's self-understanding, expectations and behaviour to be reformed. "You can try to empower women all you like," Indian doctor V.I. Mathan told a recent church consultation, "but they cannot control the men. Where the work needs to go is with the male population."²⁷ Joan Holmes has observed that: "In order to truly have effective prevention strategies, traditional gender roles that have gone unquestioned for generations must now be re-examined and transformed. What we must recognise is that men are as trapped in their traditional roles as women are. Men must have the courage to come together to examine and challenge old harmful concepts of masculinity, and create a new definition of what it means to be a man."²⁸ There is need for cultural conditioning to be reformed so as to establish, for example, that it is not necessary to masculinity to have many sexual partners nor to insist on unprotected sex. As Beverley Haddad argues: "While women themselves are active agents in their struggle to survive gender violence, which often results in them contracting HIV, church leaders cannot abdicate their responsibility. Attitudinal and behaviour patterns of men in church communities have to change, and the onus is largely on the primarily male leadership to effect this change. Of course, such change will have to begin with themselves, as all too often church leaders themselves are engaged in sexual violence against women and children."²⁹

²⁶ Stephen Lewis, "The Lack of Funding for HIV/AIDS is Mass Murder by Complacency," press briefing, United Nations, New York, 8 January 2003.

²⁷ Cit. Kenneth R. Ross, *Following Jesus and Fighting HIV/AIDS: A Call to Discipleship*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2002, p. 55; Dr Mathan is a senior consultant in the Indian Government Ministry of Health and Family who addressed a Church of Scotland consultation on HIV/AIDS in Delhi in January 2001.

²⁸ Joan Holmes, "AIDS in Africa: A Crisis of Leadership," New York: The Hunger Project, 2001.

²⁹ Beverley Haddad, "Gender Violence and HIV/AIDS: A Deadly Silence in the Church," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol. 114 (Nov. 2002), p. 102.

If individual attitudes have to undergo radical change, then so do social and economic structures. Migrant working, limited economic opportunities and cultural sexual practices all contribute to establishing patterns of behaviour which lead to the spread of HIV and AIDS. There is need to institute reform within economic organisation, for example by adjusting the working conditions of truck drivers, who have often been sexually promiscuous and responsible for spreading HIV, so that they do not have to spend many nights away from home. This can be achieved by organising a freight system where each driver makes a journey of up to four hours, exchanges trucks with a counterpart and drives home in the new truck. Of course, this involves considerable organisation and cost – but it is a matter of life and death for many people.

Mission at Stake: The Need to Practise Presence

Compounding the devastation inflicted by HIV/AIDS is the sense of exclusion, of rejection, of abandonment that is experienced by those affected. Gideon Byamugisha, an HIV-positive Anglican priest in Uganda, has commented: "In HIV/AIDS, it is not the condition itself that hurts most (because many other diseases and conditions lead to serious suffering and death), but the stigma and the possibility of rejection and discrimination, misunderstanding and loss of trust that HIV-positive people have to deal with. How important it is to reach out in recognition of common humanity. How important it is that those of us who are HIV-positive continue to live rather than waiting to die."³⁰ Those suffering from AIDS face a twofold catastrophe – their physical health is crumbling and at the same time they very often face abandonment and exclusion from the wider society. Yet they still have a life to live. So long as strength remains, they still have their gifts to contribute to the community. Parents continue to care for their children, conscious of how precious is the time they have left together. What a difference it can make to that time if they are met with affirmation and support rather than suspicion and rejection. "Only by confronting stigma and discrimination," states the

³⁰ Cit. Gillian Paterson, *AIDS and the African Churches: Exploring the Challenges*, London: Christian Aid, 2001, p. 12.

United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, "will the fight against HIV/AIDS be won".³¹

When abandonment and exclusion prevail, the follower of Jesus Christ is called to offer presence and accompaniment. It may be that this is the primary form which Christian mission has to take – simply "being there" with those who face the desolation that AIDS brings. Before any word is spoken, there is the need to be present. Michael Nazir Ali has highlighted "presence" as an expression of Christian mission that in the past has been developed by the Franciscans and the Eastern Orthodox.³² Offering an active presence may be the primary Christian act of witness in face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Quiet presence may communicate more than noisy pronouncement. Certainly, the right to speak has to be earned rather than presumed upon. Nigel Pounce draws inspiration from "the important rabbinical teaching that the *shekhinah* stood at the head of the bed of any patient. To visit the sick – regardless of the illness or how it was contracted – is therefore to enter into God's Presence."³³ There is need to draw near, to be silent in face of the suffering, to absorb its scale and its terror. Only from within the dark valley that HIV/AIDS has brought to humankind can credible words be spoken.

This may be a time for the church to recover its calling not to be reserved for the "respectable" but rather to be a space to which people come to find forgiveness for their sins and healing for their wounds. In today's context this means taking HIV and AIDS into the vocabulary of the church. Then its worship and witness will signal that those infected or affected by the epidemic are affirmed, accepted and embraced rather than being judged and excluded. V.I. Mathan has called on churches "by the example of their communities" to show the nation "how the margin-

³¹ See www.unaids.org. Stigma and discrimination is the theme of the two-year World AIDS Campaign 2002-03.

³² Michael Nazir-Ali, *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission*, London: Collins, 1990, pp. 139-148.

³³ Nigel Pounce, "AIDS and Faith: A Combination Therapy? A Theological Investigation of the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Faith Communities in New York City," STM, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 2001, p. 20.

alised can become the central point to the community".³⁴ Destigmatising those who are HIV-positive will not only make a world of difference to their own experience but will also create an environment in which the challenges posed by the epidemic can be realistically faced by others. It may be that the single most important thing the church can do to resist the spread of HIV/AIDS is simply to talk about it – in its worship and its prayer, its teaching and its preaching.

It will not be sufficient, however, to render the life of the congregation accessible to those who are HIV-positive. There is a need to think critically and act decisively in regard to the social location of the church. The spread of HIV and AIDS highlights the division between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the vulnerable, the strong and the weak. Though anyone can become infected with HIV, the incidence is massively concentrated in the poorer sections of the world community. What is more, it is the weakest and the most vulnerable within poor communities who are most likely to be infected. Bryant Myers: "Who is dying? The poor, the alien and the orphan. This plague defines the excluded of this world. This pandemic declares who it is that has no value. This disastrous disease seeks out and destroys 'the least of these'."³⁵ The solidarity with the poor in which the church finds its identity needs to find fresh expression in face of the reality of the epidemic.

In offering presence in the context of HIV/AIDS, the church has the capacity to be there when death approaches. Solidarity in suffering may be the first thing that is called for but, in face of the desolating silence of approaching death, there can come the time when words are needed. Here it is important that the church does have something to say. Some Malawian Christians, reflecting on the painful challenge of HIV/AIDS, have responded in this way: "Jesus, the incarnate son of God encourages us to lift up our eyes and to look forward to the embracing arms of the merciful Father. He himself died on the cross. Even in the darkest hour of his life he did not lose confidence and trust in his father. His death on the

³⁴ Cit. Kenneth R. Ross, *Following Jesus and Fighting HIV/AIDS: A Call to Discipleship*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2002, p. 17.

³⁵ Bryant Myers, "Africa and HIV/AIDS: Who is my Sister, my Brother?," *MARC Newsletter*, Monrovia: World Vision, November 2002," p. 2.

cross and his open arms are a symbol of the trust that we can have in the face of the mystery of death."³⁶ The assurance that in death, as in life, we belong to Jesus Christ liberates us to live every minute to the full and with a sense that the victory of Easter Day will be ours even if there are times when the darkness of Easter Saturday seems to fall upon us. With the Heidelberg Catechism we are able to say: "in all affliction ... I may await with head held high the very Judge from heaven, who has submitted to God's judgement for me and removed the whole curse from me"³⁷ The prayer of the church is that all who are affected by HIV/AIDS, ourselves included, would be enabled to have such confidence.

To be present with people facing suffering and death should not be considered a uni-directional act of charity. As has been demonstrated in many previous situations, it is often the weakest and most vulnerable who discover the reality of God in ways that are inspiring to all. The courage and faith that we encounter as we enter into solidarity with individuals and communities facing HIV/AIDS can open up new depths to Christian faith. Scottish visitors to Africa encountered a 13-year old girl whose mother and father had died. She was solely responsible for her two younger brothers. She had given up school to care for them. After the death of their parents, relatives had come and removed everything from the house, even the animals. When visited by a church member, who was moved to tears, the girl said: "Please don't cry for us because you make us feel hopeless. Even without anything, the Lord is sustaining us. I have seen the hand of the Lord leading us." When asked how she manages, she responded: "God loves and leads us."³⁸ Ultimately, a missiology of presence is about discovering God's presence in the midst of the epidemic.

³⁶ [Episcopal Conference of Malawi and Malawi Council of Churches], *The God of Love and Compassion: A Christian Meditation on AIDS*, Zomba: Kachere Series, [2000], p. 7.

³⁷ The Heidelberg Catechism 1563, *The Book of Confessions*, Louisville: General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), 1993.

³⁸ Cit. Kenneth R. Ross, *Following Jesus and Fighting HIV/AIDS: A Call to Discipleship*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2002, p. 41.

Conclusion

Ronald Nicolson has observed that "every now and then something comes along which changes the way we think about everything". He suggests that the AIDS pandemic is in this category.³⁹ The scale of the suffering that it causes and the inability of currently available resources to resist it, poses a challenge not only to social and medical science but also to theology and spirituality. "We cannot deal with AIDS without taking the spiritual dimension of life into account, and we cannot continue in a spirituality which leaves AIDS off the agenda."⁴⁰ This means that the encounter with the impact of the epidemic is a formative moment for Christian mission. Here is an opportunity for Christian mission to go somewhere it has never been before, to engage with questions of suffering, of mortality, of sexuality which have never before been focussed in this particular way.

As Musa Dube and Tinyiko Maluleke have written: "Few diseases foreground questions about the meaning, objective and content of life in the way that HIV/AIDS does.... What is life for those living with the HIV/AIDS death sentence? What is life for those who have seen whole families and numerous friends succumb to this deadly disease? What is life for whole villages, communities and even nations living under the shadow of HIV/AIDS? No single individual or institution has final answers to these questions. Yet it seems to us that faith communities are in a good position not only to ask these kinds of questions, and to do so sharply; but also, to attempt answering them in ways that few other arms of civil society are able to."⁴¹

There is much at stake for Christian mission. If it cannot offer convincing answers to such questions, it may fail one of the great tests of this moment in history. Wilbert Shenk has written that: "It is in the nature of mission always to seek the frontier where the struggle between faith and

³⁹ Ronald Nicolson, *God in AIDS*, London: SCM, 1996, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 21.

⁴¹ Musa W. Dube & Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "Guest Editorial – HIV/AIDS as the New Site of Struggle: Theological, Biblical and Religious Perspectives," *Missionalia* Vol. 29/2 (August 2001), p. 120.

unfaith is most clearly and urgently drawn."⁴² This essay suggests that one such frontier facing the church today is the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is a defining issue for Christian mission. If the church is not able to confess its faith in the eye of this storm, then it will have missed a part of its core calling in these times. On the other hand, if it is able to minister God's presence and to be a prophetic force for change, then it can be a significant part of the answer to the questions posed by the pandemic.

Men who are driven by poverty to become migrant labourers, for example, are more likely to adopt a lifestyle that exposes them to the danger of infection, than those who are able to make a living without leaving home. Girls desperately in need of resources to continue their education are more likely to accede to the advances of unscrupulous older men making promises of support than girls who know that provision for their education is already secure. Such pressures of poverty often lie behind the decisions that lead people into the sexual encounter through which they become infected with HIV. Their lifestyle may lead to them being categorised as "sinners" but, if so, they are the very ones whom Jesus has come to call! If they are "sick" then it is especially for them that Jesus has come. In exercising this "preferential option for the poor," Jesus invites us to follow him. It is precisely when we share with them in their need that we discover why Christ has come and our own desperate need for redemption. In the world of the rich and the powerful, little attention is paid to the 40 million people who are living with HIV/AIDS. Jesus looks with different eyes and he calls us to see things his way.

The epidemic challenges the Christian understanding of creation and redemption. There is a theological journey to be made to reassert the Christian conviction that every human being, without exception, is created in the image of God and is loved by God so much that he sent the Son into the world. There is a need to address those who are stigmatised on account of their HIV-positive status with the good news of a Saviour who has taken away our stigma by taking it on himself. There is need to hold out the strong hope that none of the ravages of AIDS can ever cancel out the image of God in the sufferers nor do they ever go beyond the reach of God's love. In the last stages of their illness AIDS patients may be para-

⁴² Wilbert Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, New York: Orbis, 1999, p. 183.

lysed, incontinent and demented yet the love of God, Creator and Redeemer, is strong enough to be with them in that dark valley. Even in torment and abandonment we can find comfort and hope through the crucified Christ who "loved us and gave himself for us". The church has a special calling to teach and to live this message amidst the catastrophe.

Churches from less affected parts of the world can reach out to help those in the worst-affected areas. Already, mission partners are involved, alongside their national colleagues, as doctors, nurses or community workers, in the care and treatment of AIDS patients in church hospitals and in their communities. They put themselves at risk in order to demonstrate the love of Christ to those infected by the disease. Especially those who are involved in surgery know that, while they take maximum care to protect themselves, still they face a small but real risk of infection. They take that risk because they are convinced that it is the way of Christ. Following the one who was filled with compassion and who reached out to touch the man with leprosy, they lay themselves on the line in Christ's name. For the church, it is not enough to speak – there is the need to be present with those who are suffering, to be the eyes and the hands and the love of Christ to those dying of AIDS.

Not all of us can go and offer that costly service. But we all can take this crisis to heart, we all can pray for those who are infected and those who are at risk of infection, we can all support those who go in Christ's name to offer care and education and healing. We can all make the AIDS pandemic *our problem*. Following a Lord and Saviour, who was filled with compassion and who reached out to touch the sufferer when he was confronted by disease, can we do anything less?

7. Christian Mission and the End of Poverty: Time for Eschatology

The early years of the 21st century have witnessed widespread recognition that ending extreme poverty is the greatest moral challenge facing the world today. The increasing prosperity of the late 20th century in some parts of the world stands in sharp contrast to the deepening poverty in other parts. Economic globalization has meant unprecedented affluence for some but ever more severe privation for others. The UNDP Human Development Report for 2005 starkly observes: "Every hour more than 1,200 children die away from the glare of media attention. This is equivalent to three tsunamis a month, every month, hitting the world's most vulnerable citizens – its children. The causes of death will vary, but the overwhelming majority can be traced to a single pathology: poverty."¹ Through the United Nations the auspicious occasion of the Millennium was taken as an opportunity to address the issue of poverty and underdevelopment. The UN Millennium Declaration set out eight Millennium Development Goals through which the international community aimed to engage with the root causes of extreme poverty.²

This is also an issue which has engaged the popular imagination. As the economist Joseph Stiglitz acknowledges: "...it is the trade unionists, students, environmentalists – ordinary citizens – marching on the streets of Prague, Seattle, Washington, and Genoa who have put the need for reform on the agenda of the developed world."³ When the G8 met at Gleneagles in Scotland in 2005, the meeting was marked by Scotland's biggest ever street demonstration when some 250,000 people gathered in Edinburgh to peacefully express their conviction that action to defeat extreme poverty needed to be top priority for the leaders of the rich

¹ United Nations Development Program, *International Cooperation at a Crossroads: Aid, Trade and Security in an Unequal World - Human Development Report 2005*, New York: UNDP, 2005, p. 1.

² Ibid., p. 3.

³ Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*, London: Penguin, 2002, p. 9.

world. The march was the climax of a campaign known as **MAKE POVERTYHISTORY** which captured the imagination of people in the UK in a remarkable way. Nine out of ten people in the UK had heard of **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**, 7 million bought the white wrist bands which were the symbol of the campaign, and one-third of 16-25 year-olds were involved in the campaign. Half of those who marched on 2 July 2005 had never been involved in a demonstration before. On any reckoning, the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign represents a significant mobilisation of popular opinion. Politicians have a sense that this is an issue on which they are expected to deliver. At meetings of the G8, the UN, the WTO etc, this item is prominent on the agenda in a way that was not the case previously.

The **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign was marked by clarity and sophistication in its analysis. While acknowledging the complexity of the debate about the causes of poverty, it was able to bring a clear call for action in three key areas.

(1) It called for the unpayable debts of the world's poorest countries to be cancelled in full, by fair and transparent means. This echoes the call of the Jubilee 2000 movement that came to prominence at Birmingham in 1997, the last time the G8 had met in the UK. At Gleneagles the G8 agreed a debt deal to wipe out £23bn of the debt owed by poor countries. 18 countries benefit through a provision that yields US\$1 billion per year. Though this amounts to little more than 10% of the debt cancellation needed to end extreme poverty, it represents continuing momentum in the struggle to remove the burden of unpayable debt from the poorest countries.

(2) **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** argued that there is need for a rapid increase in the quantity and quality of international aid. Given the scale of the extreme poverty in the world today and the need for increased aid flows to rebuild shattered infrastructure, health care systems and educational provision, a swift timetable to reach the target of 0.7% of GDP being devoted to overseas aid is urgently needed. There is also need for more work to be done on ensuring the quality of aid, eg. by ensuring that funds are used towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The G8 responded with an undertaking to raise the level of aid to developing countries by \$48 billion by the year 2010. This was a signifi-

cant achievement of the Gleneagles Summit, the most impressive outcome on overseas aid from any meeting of the G8. Nonetheless, levels of international aid remain too low to make the kind of impact that is needed if the Millennium Development Goals are to be realised.⁴

(3) The deepest challenge of **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** came in the area of trade justice. It has been convincingly demonstrated that the biggest single factor that would enable poor countries to emerge from the oppression of poverty would be the advent of fair terms of trade.⁵ At the Gleneagles G8, leaders decided not to take any decisive action on the export subsidies that destroy livelihoods of poor people around the world. On the contrary, they continue to promote the policies of forcing free trade on poor countries, dumping agricultural products and not regulating multinational companies. So little was achieved on the issue of trade at Gleneagles that attention turned to the World Trade Organisation and its so-called "development round" of trade talks, begun at Doha in 2001. Regrettably, after a series of stormy and unproductive meetings, the Doha round finally collapsed in July 2006.⁶ Clear and convincing analysis of what needs to be done to defeat extreme poverty has not been matched by the decisive action which it requires. The lack of adequate motivation poses a challenge that has yet to be answered.

One major attempt to infuse the required motivation has been the establishment of an eschatological framework. This is most evident in the construction of the Millennium Development Goals - with 2015 being identified as the date by which they must be achieved. This has brought a sense of urgency to the United Nations as an organisation and to politicians who identify with the aspirations of the MDGs. The quasi-religious character of the effort is demonstrated in the almost creedal character of the eight development goals which carry something of the aura of the sacred. (See The Millennium Development Goals 2005, succeeded from 2015 by the Sustainable Development Goals) Its popular advocates can

⁴ Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: How We Can Make It Happen in Our Lifetime*, London: Penguin, 2005, p. xvii.

⁵ Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work*, London: Allen Lane, 2006, pp. 61-101.

⁶ See wto.org/english/news_e/news06_e/gc_27july06_e.htm [23.9.2006].

assume an apocalyptic air and make a stirring secular altar call. The rock star Bono, e.g., puts the challenge: "We *can* be the generation that no longer accepts that an accident of latitude determines whether a child lives or dies – but *will* we be that generation? Will we in the West realize our potential or will we sleep in the comfort of our affluence with apathy and indifference murmuring softly in our ears?" Consciously eschatological language was adopted by Jeffrey Sachs, Special Adviser to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, when he entitled his book *The End of Poverty* and argued that "... extreme poverty can be ended not in the time of our grandchildren, but in *our* time."⁷

This sense of eschatological urgency has been brought to the religious community by the influential statement of Jim Wallis: "For the first time in history we have the information, knowledge, technology, and resources to bring the worst of global poverty to an end. What we don't have is the moral and political will to do so. And it is becoming clear that it will take a new moral energy to create the political will. I believe the religious communities of the world could provide the 'tipping point' in the struggle to eliminate the world's most extreme poverty. Faith communities could provide the crucial social leadership the world desperately needs, and I don't see where else that prophetic leadership might come from."⁸ This sense of momentous opportunity and responsibility gripped the London Forum which brought together British and American church leaders under the co-chairmanship of Jim Wallis and the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, just ahead of the Gleneagles meeting of the G8 in 2005. The meeting was struck by the suggestion that the call to defeat extreme poverty in the early 21st century might be a contemporary equivalent of the call to participate in the "evangelization of the world in this generation" which had galvanized the missionary movement at the turn of the 20th century.⁹ From both secular and religious sources have come attempts to frame the quest to end extreme

⁷ Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: How We Can Make It Happen in Our Lifetime*, London: Penguin, 2005, p. 3.

⁸ Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the American Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*, Oxford: Lion, 2005, p. 270.

⁹ Personal observation, London Forum, 29 June 2005.

poverty in an eschatological perspective with a view to providing the lever that will supply the missing motivation.

Time for Eschatology

A problem with stimulating eschatological fervour in the quest to turn back the advance of extreme poverty is that, if results are slow to appear, disillusionment can quickly set in. Already one of the Millennium Development Goals has been missed – gender disparity in primary and secondary education has not been eliminated by 2005.¹⁰ (United Nations 2005: 14-15) As we have seen, even when the leaders of the international community are offered a very clear prescription, they have failed to take the required action. Characteristically, the G8 meetings have been high on rhetoric and low on results. Their response to the expectation that they would take decisive action to address the issue of extreme poverty has been to issue statements which sound very promising but which lead to very little. As Kumi Naidoo, chair of the Global Call to Action against Poverty, put it at the end of the Gleneagles Summit: "The people have roared but the G8 has whispered." Given the scale of the problem of extreme poverty and the urgency of the need for action, it has to be said that the political leaders of the rich world have moved too slowly. While they made some substantial progress, it was still too little to afford any confidence in regard to meeting the Millennium Development Goals by the agreed date in 2015. The United Nations Development Programme concluded: "Most countries are off track for most of the MDGs. Human development is faltering in some key areas, and already deep inequalities are widening. Various diplomatic formulations and polite terminology can be found to describe the divergence between progress on human development and the ambition set out in the Millennium Declaration. None of them should be allowed to obscure a simple truth: the promise to the world's poor is being broken."¹¹ For those for whom the grinding reality of poverty is their daily experience, eschatological rhetoric regarding making poverty history can sound like a cruel joke.

¹⁰ UNDP, *International Cooperation at a Crossroads*, pp. 14-15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

At this stage, there is a wide acknowledgement that, while globalisation is bringing unprecedented economic growth, it seems to be powerless when it comes to addressing the fact that it leaves around 1 billion people in extreme and deepening poverty. The leaders of the rich nations have acknowledged that they have a responsibility to promote corrective action. Their resolve, however, is undermined by the fact that their attention tends to be absorbed by other issues that are of more immediate electoral relevance in their own countries. John Pobee has aptly parodied the young Augustine's prayer "Give me continence, Lord, but not yet" with the prayer of today's political leaders apparently being "Give us a just international economic order, Lord, but not yet."¹² When expectations are raised and little is achieved, the danger is that people lose hope. Disillusionment can easily set in. As an eschatological faith, Christianity ought to be sensitive to this issue. How does one sustain a hope that the kingdom of God is coming, when the history in which one is involved seems to move in another direction altogether? The climate of hope and expectation engendered by the Millennium Development Goals is very vulnerable to disenchantment when the political and economic forces at play seem to frustrate the efforts being made to combat poverty. It may be that a more realistically grounded eschatology is needed if hope is to be sustained and the required motivational force is to be engendered.

Another World is Coming

The World Social Forum has caught the imagination with its slogan that "another world is possible." This is something with which Christian faith can identify on account of its distinctive slant that "another world is coming". Christian believers live their lives in light of the promise that the purpose of God revealed in Jesus Christ will ultimately find expression in the new world which God will bring to birth. As Jürgen Moltmann has written: "From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward-looking and forward-moving, and therefore also revolutionising and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of the Chris-

¹² John S. Pobee, *Who are the Poor? The Beatitudes as a Call to Community*, Geneva: World Council of Churches (Risk Series), 1987, pp. 47-48.

tian faith as such, the key in which everything is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day. For Christian faith lives from the raising of the crucified Christ, and strains after the promises of the universal future of Christ."¹³

The new world promised in Jesus Christ is one that very directly takes account of the issue of poverty. The biblical vision puts the poverty issue in very clear profile: "Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people" (Psalm 113:5-7) It records the words which Jesus chose to define his mission: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4:18) It elucidates the ethical implications for those who follow Jesus: "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (I John 3:17) The conviction that poverty is something inimical to the purposes of God gives rise to the clear ethical imperative that we have a responsibility to work for its eradication.

The eschatological vision of the Bible brings an irreverence and questioningness to any discussion of economic matters. In a world like today's where an unfettered market system reigns almost unchallenged, the Bible offers a certain disrespect and a sharp critique to any dominant system which causes exclusion and suffering. In the Book of Revelation, e.g., as Rowland and Corner point out: "The grandeur of Rome which seems to be invincible and even divine, is revealed for what it really is. It is a bombastic sham maintained by vicious and diabolical means. This is a stunning critique of the accepted order and received wisdom."¹⁴ Likewise today the "empire" of globalization seems to hold an unchallengeable

¹³ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, London: SCM, 1967, p. 16.

¹⁴ Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies*, London: SPCK, 1990, p. 135.

and unquestionable position. Using the story of Jesus Christ as the key with which to open up an eschatological horizon, resources are released which enable a challenge to be made to the currently prevailing model of globalization. Michael Taylor, e.g., invokes biblical language and imagery to counter the received wisdom of free-market economics:

I'm convinced ... that if we want to pursue the common good and the welfare of our city then we should put the poor first: the poor to whom Jesus is said to have brought good news; the poor who are to be raised to royal status in God's kingdom, set on the thrones of the earth; the poor who are invited to the feast; the poor who are the blessed ones; the poor who are the most reliable icons of Christ in the world; the poor on whose treatment rests our whole salvation. My faith is not a trickle-down theory where you first make the rich even richer and all boats will eventually rise. My faith is a trickle-up theory where we put the poor first and everything else will then fall into place.¹⁵

An equally direct challenge is posed by the report of a World Alliance of Reformed Churches taskforce:

- Whereas today's neoliberal economy is exclusive, God's economy is inclusive.
- Whereas the neoliberal economy is an exploitative economy of the poor, God's economy is a protective economy in favour of the poor.
- Whereas in the neoliberal economy the flow of wealth is from the poor to the rich, in God's economy it goes from the rich to the poor.
- Whereas in the neoliberal economy the poor are invisible, in God's economy the vulnerable are before everyone's eyes.
- Whereas the neoliberal economy is based on greed and profit-making, God's economy is based on community and mutual support.

¹⁵ Michael Taylor, "Eat, Drink and be Merry for Tomorrow We Live," unpublished address to the British Methodist Conference, 2001.

- Whereas the neoliberal economy is based on limitless competition, God's economy is an economy of cooperation.¹⁶

Is another world possible? A first contribution from Christian eschatological hope is a subversive one: to open up a dialogical space within which the received wisdom of the prevailing economic system may be challenged and critiqued.

A second contribution is to set forth a positive vision that inspires and impels the action which is needed to counter a negative force such as extreme poverty. Without a vision of a very different kind of world, it is unlikely that the struggle to overcome poverty will retain its impetus. As Wesley Granberg-Michaelson observes: "...vision means seeing something according to the way we believe it should and will turn out, creating a compelling and sustaining picture of our most desirable future. Religious vision roots this in the promises of biblical faith, using what theologians call 'eschatological imagination' and discerning the ongoing movement of God's Spirit within the world beckoning the community of faith to respond."¹⁷ God has promised a world in which the oppression and misery of poverty have no place, a world in which the salvation offered in Jesus Christ finds full and abundant expression. The effect of this promise, as Moltmann has stated is that "the hearers of the promise become incongruous with the reality around them, as they strike out in hope towards the promised new future."¹⁸ Far from faith in the promise of God detaching believers from the struggles of today, it provides a fundamental motivation to be involved and to remain tireless in the quest for justice. Again Moltmann makes the point well: "The expectation of the promised future of the kingdom of God which is coming to man and the world to set them right and create life, makes us ready to expend ourselves unrestrainedly and unreservedly in love and in the work of reconciliation of the world with God and his future..."¹⁹ Sensitive to the con-

¹⁶ World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Letter from Accra*, Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 2004, 36-37.

¹⁷ Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *Leadership from Inside Out: Spirituality and Organisational Change*, New York: Crossroad, 2004, p. 94.

¹⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, London: SCM, pp. 99-100.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

trast between God's promised future and the conditions prevailing in our world today, Christian believers are imbued with the motivation to do whatever they can to move the latter in the direction of the former.

Defying Disillusionment: Hope and Realism

The eschatological framework which has brought urgency to the contemporary effort to eradicate extreme poverty carries, as we have seen, the risk of disillusionment, should the somewhat arbitrary goals not be realised. Christian faith has functioned for a long time with a beckoning eschatological horizon that might seem to expose its adherents to a similar risk of disillusionment. Indeed, it has often been observed that the first generation of Christians appear to have lived in imminent expectation of Christ's return. Were they deluded? Were they disappointed? Christian theology has had to grapple with such questions and has generated an eschatology which embraces both a fulfilment which is "in principle" already present and yet which in its fullness is still awaited. Commenting on Paul's theology, Herman Ridderbos observes that: "Time and again we accordingly see that both these motifs – that of the 'realized' and that of the still 'prospective' eschatology – are brought into immediate relation with each other and, as it were, flow into one another..."²⁰ This carefully nuanced eschatology is valuable when it comes to sustaining hope in face of the frequent disappointments which meet anyone who is engaged in today's struggle to bring an end to the sickening poverty which blights our generation.

There needs to be a balance which allows campaigners to be wholly committed to a strategic objective in the contemporary struggle while, at the same time, allowing the particular objective to be relativized by the ultimate eschatological hope. This is a balance that Latin American liberation theologians have sought to establish, as they have engaged their Christian faith in the struggle of the poor in their particular context. Having argued passionately that divine salvation takes effect now in our world through the struggle to eradicate injustice, violence and oppression, Gustavo Gutierrez makes the careful qualification that: "The histori-

²⁰ Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, p. 493.

cal, political liberating event *is* the growth of the kingdom and *is* a liberating event; but it is not *the* coming of the kingdom, not *all* of salvation."²¹ Likewise Miguez Bonino observes that, while commitment to a concrete historical struggle for liberation has eschatological value in terms of the reign of God, nonetheless there is need for a certain distance to be maintained: "When the cause of Jesus Christ ... is totally and without rest equated with the cause of social and political revolution, either the Church and Jesus Christ are made redundant or the political and social revolution is clothed in a sacred or semi-sacred gown."²² At the same time, Miguez Bonino was confident that "the gospel invites and drives us to make concrete historical options and assures them of eschatological permanence insofar as they represent the quality of human existence which corresponds to the Kingdom."²³ Neither too much nor too little is the contemporary struggle for justice to be identified with the everlasting reign of God. What resources can Christian theology offer to achieve a healthy eschatological balance?

One significant feature of Christian faith is its recognition of its own provisionality. Whatever understanding it might gain, whatever steps it might take, it will remain provisional with its final destiny still awaiting it. Writing of the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, Hendrikus Berkhof observes that: "These are only starts, 'a small beginning' (Heidelberg Catechism). Though his work in individuals, churches, and cultures is powerful, it is also fragmentary and continually frustrated by human resistance.... Whatever he does is a guarantee but at the same time a postponement of the consummation."²⁴ Christian faith recognises the ambiguity and ambivalence that is built into all of our current history and experience. Nothing is final. Whatever we might achieve, in any field of endeavour, remains provisional – open to its ultimate fulfilment lying beyond what is currently attainable. This perspective allows any contem-

²¹ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, London: SCM, 1988 [1973], p. 104.

²² Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, p. 163.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

²⁴ Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p. 334.

porary engagement of Christian faith to be taken seriously as being an authentic expression of the kingdom of God, while recognising the provisional character of any outcome – that beyond it lies the further horizon of the final advent of God's kingdom, still awaited.

A further distinction that may be illuminating is that which Dietrich Bonhoeffer drew between the penultimate (the things before the last) and the ultimate. The "penultimate" refers to the current historical realities with which we are engaged while the "ultimate" refers to that which will prevail in the everlasting kingdom of God. What is the relation between the two? After resisting any solution that makes them mutually exclusive, Bonhoeffer observes:

The hungry man needs bread and the homeless man needs a roof, the dispossessed need justice and the lonely need fellowship; the undisciplined need order and the slave needs freedom.... To provide the hungry man with bread is to prepare the way for the coming of grace. But what is happening here is a thing before the last. To give bread to a hungry man is not the same as to proclaim the grace of God and justification to him, and to have received bread is not the same as to have faith. Yet for him who does these things for the sake of the ultimate, and in knowledge of the ultimate, this penultimate does bear a relation to the ultimate.²⁵

In this way Bonhoeffer charted a course which avoided, on the one hand, the danger of faith being detached from contemporary reality and absorbed in an ethereal and other-worldly understanding of salvation and, on the other hand, the danger of faith becoming totally absorbed in the struggle for justice in today's world. It is the same faith that finds expression here and now – in the "penultimate" – and in the eternal reign of God – the "ultimate". While the two are distinguished, they are integrally related to one another. This was well understood by Karl Barth:

Just because the Christian hopes for the ultimate and definitive, he also hopes for the temporal and provisional. Just because he hopes with joy for the dawn of the great light, he hopes with provisional joy for the little lights, which may come and go, but which will not come and go in vain, since as a temporary illumination they will help him to look

²⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, London: SCM, 1955, p. 95.

and move more properly towards that which they can only indicate, but which in their time they can in fact indicate. Just because he hopes for the Last Day, for the eternal year, he hopes for the next day and the next year, from which, whatever they may bring, he can always expect at least new indications of the coming of Jesus Christ.²⁶

This allows the Christian to bring both hope and realism to engagement with contemporary social challenges. An ultimate eschatological horizon which inspires and provokes engagement with current challenges is combined with recognition that whatever is achieved will be partial, provisional, and penultimate. This creates a capacity to defy disillusionment – hope continues to energize people for the struggle while they maintain a healthy realism about the limits of what can be achieved in advance of the ultimate *eschaton*.

Solidarity and Struggle

Another significant commitment of Christian faith is that it looks on the poor as subjects, people who are related to us. Bonhoeffer's "hungry man" is not simply considered in the abstract. As Duncan Forrester remarks: "The primary issue for theology is not a set of abstract concepts such as 'poverty', 'inequality' or 'justice'. It is rather poor people, and the question why they are poor and what can be done about it."²⁷ It is one of the functions of the Christian church to put its members into the kind of relationship with one another that they "rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep". (Romans 12:15) The poor are not objects of pity or charitable concern. Rather they are people with whom we identify and whose identity and initiative we respect and admire. They are the people who will lead their escape from the shackles of poverty and the role of their fellow Christians is to be in solidarity with them and to walk alongside them. The closer we can get to their suffering, their struggles and their successes, the stronger will be our determination to fight on against all odds.

²⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV/3, ed. G.W. Bromiley & T.F. Torrance, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962, p. 938.

²⁷ Duncan B. Forrester, *On Human Worth*, London: SCM, 2000, p. 158.

In analyzing the failure of attempts to promote development in the world's poorest countries, Joseph Stiglitz draws a striking analogy: "Modern high-tech warfare is designed to remove physical contact: dropping bombs from 50,000 feet ensures that one does not 'feel' what one does. Modern economic management is similar: from one's luxury hotel, one can callously impose policies about which one would think twice if one knew the people whose lives one was destroying."²⁸ Here is where the solidarity to which the church is called has a distinctive contribution to make. Its members, guided by God's "preferential option for the poor," have a built-in bias to identify with the poor, to get alongside, to share their pain and to work in solidarity with them for a future free of the anguish of poverty. When Reformed Churches from around the world came together for the WARC General Council in 2004 they commented in their *Letter from Accra*: "In today's world the divisions between the North and the South, the rich and the poor, and the powerful and the powerless, grow sharper and seek to isolate us from one another. That's why mission requires us as churches to belong more deeply to one another, overcoming those divisions through the work of God's Spirit as an evidence of the hope that is offered to the world.... More than ever, faithful mission today requires our connection – really it demands bonds of belonging – between one another as churches."²⁹ Insofar as churches can meet this challenge, they will find deep roots of motivation and have a distinctive strength to bring to the long, hard battle against the ravages of poverty.

People of faith, inspired by the vision of another world coming, and moved by their solidarity with one another, can have a capacity to confront the excesses and injustices of globalization. They are well placed to play their part in the great movement for change which Arundati Roy proposes in the following terms: "Our strategy should be not only to confront Empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness – and our ability to tell our

²⁸ Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*, London: Penguin, 2002, p. 24.

²⁹ World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Letter from Accra*.

own stories.... Remember this: We be many and they be few. They need us more than we need them."³⁰ So long as the lives of more than a billion people are blighted by extreme poverty, people who are guided by the biblical vision will occupy a questioning and protesting position vis-à-vis the prevailing economic system. This brings them into alliance with many others who, drawing on various religious and secular traditions, find themselves impelled to join the struggle so eloquently described by Arundati Roy. Among the distinctive contributions that Christians can make is the eschatology that frames their commitment to the campaign.

Conclusion: A Large Eschatology

A large eschatology, framing the whole of history, gives a framework within which the struggle to end extreme poverty can be approached with both urgency and resilience. Contrived and arbitrary time-frames for the defeat of poverty can be effective in energising an active campaign. They leave the activists, however, vulnerable to disillusionment when targets are missed and goals recede into the distance. It may be that an entirely secular framework is not sufficient to sustain the momentum of this historic campaign. Walter Wink reminds us that: "Mahatma Gandhi spoke about 'non-attachment to results' as essential for the uphill struggle against entrenched evils. We must leave the outcome in the hands of God. Yet if we believe that God is the transformative power of justice in the world, we expect our invocation to make a difference."³¹ Such a vision of God and a belief in God's eschatological future enables Christians to be totally committed to the immediate next step in the campaign, while also being able to be re-energised by their ultimate eschatological hope at moments when the campaign appears to be fruitless.

In the Christian understanding, the ultimate and the penultimate bear closely upon one another. We cannot meaningfully engage with the ultimate realities without interpreting the meaning of Christian discipleship in terms of the particular challenges that face our generation. Equally,

³⁰ Arundati Roy, *The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, London: Harper Perennial, 2004, p. 77.

³¹ Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, p. 66.

the struggle for justice in this world is integrally related to the reality of justification in the world to come.³² Integrally related but never completely identified – always there is the further horizon. The distance between what is achievable in history and that on which ultimate hope rests, opens up the space in which one may, one must, wholeheartedly participate in today's struggle for justice while knowing that, whatever the outcome today, there will always be a further horizon calling one forward in the direction of God's future. As John Pobee suggests: "It is about living between the times, this time and eternity. I use that phrase to suggest that the call to show mercy is a call to live the eternal life of the kingdom of God in this temporal and temporary scene. That was what those who were put on the right of the king in the parable of the sheep and the goats did. They lived eternity in their dealings with the naked, the imprisoned, the hungry."³³ The kind of zeal and sacrificial commitment that led Christians 100 years ago to set about "the evangelization of the world *in this generation*" can be activated today for the historic struggle to end extreme poverty. Faith can provoke a sense of urgency while at the same time recognising the penultimate character of the contemporary struggle and returning to the ultimate vision for fresh inspiration and energy whenever this is needed. In this way Christians can bring a passionate urgency to the great moral challenge presented by extreme poverty while also having the staying power generated by the large eschatology that frames their faith.

³² See John W. de Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology: a South African Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans & Cape Town: David Philip, 1991, p. 278.

³³ Pobee, *Who Are the Poor?* p. 25.

8. Ethnic Nationalism, Violent Conflict and the Grace of God

Conflict between two ethnic communities was the dominant feature of life in northern Malawi when the Livingstonia Mission began work there in the 1880s.¹ The Tonga people who lived along the shore of Lake Malawi found themselves facing an immigrant people – the Ngoni who had originally been refugees from the Zulu Empire of Shaka but who now asserted themselves as an aggressive, military people. Ngoni raids on Tonga villages and the inevitable Tonga reprisals provided the political context in which the Scottish missionaries began their work of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Their's was a precarious position since, if they became inadvertently identified with one side or the other, they could very easily be drawn into the conflict themselves. So they lived dangerously but they persevered. Once they had begun to learn the language, one of their first tasks was Bible translation. At first all they could manage were a few selected passages. One of their choices was the passage in Isaiah 11 which sets forth the vision of the end of all violence and destruction – a time when wolves and sheep would live happily together and when the lion would lie down with the lamb. One day the attempt to translate this passage was read to a gathering of Tonga smallholders and fisherfolk. Unlike most of us, these Tonga people knew lions and they knew lambs. Lion and lamb lying down together – that could never be! There could be nothing more absurd. "These missionaries are definitely crazy – imagine anyone talking such nonsense!" So this first attempt at a Bible translation went down as a huge joke among the Tonga people and they had many laughs at the expense of the missionaries.

As time went on, however, both Tonga and Ngoni became ever more interested in the message that the missionaries preached and the time came when some were baptised and began to form worshipping congregations. One day a number of congregations came together for a communion service. On one side of the minister sat an elder of the Tonga

¹ See John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 2nd ed. Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000.

people, so recently raided; and on the other an elder from among the Ngoni, the proud warrior people. "As the service proceeded, one man in the congregation was twitching with excitement. As soon as the benediction was spoken and the people rose to go, he rushed among his friends crying, 'Today I have seen it. With these two very eyes of mine. Yes, now I have seen it. He was right.' 'What have you seen, brother?' they demanded. 'I have seen the lion lie down with the lamb.'"²

This sense of reconciliation and the new identity which it forged is reflected in some of the hymns which were composed by the first generation of Ngoni Christians. Still sung in Malawi today is the great hymn of Peter Thole which includes these lines:

Leap up my soul; leap up and sing
Take heart again; here comes your king.
Redemption done by God's right hand
Is breaking forth *through all the land*.
Dance, dance my heart; rejoice and sing
This is the morning of the king.
Break forth in praise, let men declare
The dawn is breaking *everywhere*.³

This expansive and unifying vision was a response to the Christian message. It broke through geographical distances and historical differences to give people a sense of belonging together, united by the momentous event of the coming of the gospel of Christ. Without losing or compromising their locality or ethnicity, people opened themselves to a wider sense of belonging and embraced a redefined identity. This was a powerful force for reconciliation.

² Fergus Macpherson, *North of the Zambezi: A Modern Missionary Memoir*, Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1998, pp. 169-70.

³ Fergus Macpherson, "Sumu za Chifipa: Christian Songs in Malawi," *Bulletin of the Scottish Institute of Missionary Studies*, Vol. 6-7 (1990-91), p. 52; see also Kenneth R. Ross, *Christianity in Malawi: A Sourcebook*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1996, pp. 49-67.

Identity Politics and Contemporary Conflicts

Not so long ago, such tales of warring tribes being reconciled through receiving the Christian gospel seemed very dated. Today they suddenly have a very contemporary ring. Sources of identity that were suppressed during the bi-polar era of the Cold War have re-surfaced with a vengeance in the course of the 1990s. As Michael Ignatieff comments: "The key narrative of the new world order is the disintegration of nation states into ethnic civil war; the key architects of that order are warlords; and the key language of our age is ethnic nationalism."⁴ Tribal warfare is no longer at a distance either historically or geographically. Rather it appears to be thriving in today's conditions. While a conflict may present itself as a struggle between two intransigent ethnic or religious groups, it is necessary to recognise that there are invariably deeper forces at work.

Whatever may be the local factors in creating a situation of conflict, there is the underlying global reality of what the United Nations Development Programme describes as "parallel worlds".⁵ There is security, affluence and power in the one; violence, poverty and disintegration in the other. In the situation of increasing deprivation in which many communities find themselves in today's world, ethnic and/or religious identity can often become a rallying point in the struggle for survival.⁶ Such sources of identity can also be exploited by unscrupulous politicians in

⁴ Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*, London: BBC Books and Chatto & Windus, 1993, p. 2.

⁵ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 1.

⁶ In identity politics it is often difficult to disentangle religious and ethnic components. As Scott Appleby comments: "The distinctions between religion and ethnicity as bases for nationalism are seldom clear in practice. In many settings the two are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Religion can provide a supernatural justification for mundane ethnic claims, lending them an eternal (and thus non-negotiable) aura. Likewise, ethnic society is often the very soil in which the otherwise lifeless seed of religion is planted and takes root.... Many of these conflicts are called 'ethnoreligious' because it is virtually impossible to disaggregate the precise roles of religion and ethnicity." R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, Lanham and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, p. 61.

order to secure their own power or advance their own agendas. As a result, the growth of an exclusive global economy has been accompanied by an explosion of civil wars, genocide and ethnic cleansing. Identity politics is the dynamite that, under such conditions, ignites inter-communal conflict.

As identity politics provokes conflict, causing untold suffering around the world, how can Christian faith give practical expression to the reconciliation of which the gospel speaks?

Relativization of Identity and Reconciliation of Communities

The Bible recognises the nations or ethnic communities that mark human society. Indeed, it is all *nations* who are to be made disciples.⁷ Yet when nations claim an absolute loyalty they become idols and have to be cut down to size. Christian mission does its work within this dialectic of *affirming* national and ethnic identity as the sphere within which Christ becomes known and enfleshed, while always *relativizing* it as incomplete in itself and finding its destiny in the wider purpose of God which embraces all peoples and draws them together before the throne of the Lamb.⁸ It says both "yes" and "no" to the claims of the nations. Yes, they are valued and loved by God and called to discipleship in and through Jesus Christ. But, *no*, they can never have the absolute loyalty that we owe to God alone and, *no*, their ultimate destiny is not found in themselves but in the wider purpose of God in which they are called to have a part. As Christoph Schwoebel comments: "Over against our solidarity as sinners and our calling to be one in Christ these distinctions [of class, nation, culture, race or sex] have at best a penultimate and relative value. Their value is relative to the reality of reconciliation that is promised to us in the gospel. This relativization of political, national, cultural, eth-

⁷ See Matthew 28:19.

⁸ Cf. N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, (Christian Origins and the Question of God Vol. 1) London: SPCK, 1992, pp. 448-49.

nic and racial absolutes is one of the most important implications of the message of reconciliation."⁹

The church's mission constantly drives it to become fully local, rooted in the native soil of each particular community – what mission studies refers to as indigenization. Yet it is also ever conscious of its catholic or universal character, that it is part of a community of faith whose scope is global and whose intention is to reach out to the whole of humanity. This gives the church the capacity both to affirm the integrity of national and ethnic identities but always to de-absolutize them and to lead them to find their purpose and destiny in a wider community to which many others bring the wealth of their histories, cultures, languages and modes of thought.¹⁰ "The distance born out of allegiance to God and God's future," writes Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf, "creates space in us to receive the other."¹¹ Through active partnership in mission this vital reality comes to life within the church. We are able to appreciate the glorious diversity of a multi-ethnic world while discovering the common belonging in a wider community of faith that sets our own ethnic identity in its true perspective. This can be a very significant building block in the resolution of ethnically-based conflict.

Partnership in Mission: Recovering a Common Belonging

Underlying ethnically-based conflict is the economic disparity between the affluent and the impoverished which creates the conditions in which people turn in desperation to destructive identity politics. Here, there is need to point beyond the paradigm of protective security to the Christian vision of mutual dependency and vulnerability in which security and hope for all may be sustained. To do so in today's world means stubbornly, tirelessly working at the church-to-church partnerships that hold to-

⁹ Christoph Schwoebel, "Reconciliation: From Biblical Observations to Dogmatic Reconstruction," in Colin E. Gunton ed., *The Theology of Reconciliation*, London & New York: T. & T. Clark, 2003, p. 37.

¹⁰ Cf. Michael W. Payne, "Identity and Global Ethnic Violence: A Theological-Missiological Reflection," *Mission Studies*, Vol. XIX-2, 38 (2002), pp. 113-135.

¹¹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1996, p. 51.

gether brothers and sisters in Christ across the divide. The greater the economic divide between North and South, however, the more difficult it becomes to express partnership meaningfully. John Hull has stated the difficulty in this way: "The iron curtain has passed away and even the bamboo curtain hardly exists, but the place has been taken by the money curtain. We in the two-seventh rich world are surrounded by a money curtain which is like a one-way mirror. It is invisible to those of us on the inside because we can see right through it, but to the poor majority outside the money curtain it stands as a glittering barrier through which they cannot pass. We can go to them but they cannot come to us."¹² Making partnerships work across such a barrier can often seem a thankless task. Yet is it not our calling to witness to the one who has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility? Do we not have to point to a curtain that is torn apart from top to bottom?

Elusive, fragile, vulnerable as it is, there is a reality delineated in the concept of partnership in the gospel which takes us into the heart of what it means to be Christ's. Indeed, while admittedly it too often remains at the level of lip service, it gives the opportunity to discover the true cost of discipleship. To enter into partnership in the gospel with another church is to be prepared to offer meaningful presence and solidarity at the worst of times as well as at the best of times. Only through such active witness to its faith can the church offer hope to the world of our time. In the context of the "war against terrorism" it is often pointed out that it is the underlying causes of terrorism – poverty, injustice, ecological degradation – which need to be combated. Drain the swamp and there will be no more mosquitos! In South Africa the point has been well made that talk of reconciliation is hollow if it is not founded upon the struggle for economic justice.¹³ It is here that the partnership in the gospel, which brings together in common commitment those on either side in our divided world, may be seed for solutions to the deepest causes of conflict in our

¹² John M. Hull, "Mission, Education and Globalisation," Churches Commission on Mission Annual Conference papers, Durham, Sept 2000.

¹³ See David Mosoma, "Economic Reconciliation: Foundation for a Just Society," *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa*, Vol. 11/2 (1997), pp. 64-80; R.T.H. Dolamo, "Reconciliation and Economic Justice in South Africa: The Role of the Church and Theology," *Voices from the Third World*, Vol. 22/1 (1999), pp. 85-96.

time. By aligning itself, through partnership, with the most excluded and most disadvantaged sections of the global community, sharing their life and speaking with them and for them, the church points to the reconciliation in Christ which is the hope of the world.

It is this kind of partnership, sometimes sustained over generations, which breaks through the invisible curtain between the "parallel worlds". Perhaps it finds its most powerful expression in contexts where mission partners serve together in multi-ethnic teams or communities. Their deep engagement with one another forms the kind of human bridge that can link churches, cultures and civilisations through faith in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, far from creating another exclusive, polarising community, the experience of discovering the identity of others through shared mission commitment tends to function as preparation and training for encounter with those who belong to other faith communities.¹⁴ By cultivating deep personal relationships that transcend every human demarcation and division, Christian mission generates both the bonds and the skills needed to make reconciliation a visible and potent reality.

The Surprise Factor: God's Grace

So many people have been hurt and wounded by the raging conflicts of our time that something truly radical is needed before there can be any hope of healing and reconciliation. When great wrongs have been perpetrated it may be that retributive justice is not enough to set things right. There is need to find what Desmond Tutu has called, "the difficult but ultimately rewarding path of destroying enemies by turning them into friends".¹⁵ In the final analysis, this is the path of God's grace. It is grace which ever surprises us because it is unexpected and unmerited. "Not diminished but rather fulfilled through self-limitation, God stoops to endure and thus to heal and conquer the most broken, terminal conditions

¹⁴ Cf. D. Preman Niles, "Toward the Fullness of Life: Intercontextual Relationships in Mission," *International Review of Mission*, Vol. XCI No. 363 (October 2002), pp. 471-82.

¹⁵ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, London: Rider, 1999, p. 138.

of the human tragedy."¹⁶ Amazing grace! This is what grips us in Jesus Christ and gives us a capacity for forgiveness and reconciliation that we would otherwise never find in ourselves. When all human efforts to resolve an intractable conflict have been exhausted, there can be the surprise of God's grace – opening up a possibility that no one had thought was there.

Narratives of hatred and vengeance are aplenty. The church is charged to offer a counter-narrative of grace, forgiveness and reconciliation. As John Webster comments: "Human acts of reconciliation are in accordance with the structure of reality which God in Christ creates and to the existence of which the gospel testifies; and therefore they are acts which tend towards the true end of creation that God's reconciling act establishes once and for all in Christ's reconciling person and work."¹⁷ Rooted in the experience of God's grace, the church can offer space for truth, for justice, for healing, for new possibilities. Under Archbishop Tutu's chairmanship, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was able to offer such space within a very public forum. Perhaps it is only under the shadow of God's grace that it is possible.

Confidence in the grace of God is grounded in the reality of Jesus Christ. The Christ who enters the life of a community is the same Jesus Christ who so opened himself to others as to die for them. The cross, planted at the core of the community, moves it to find its identity not in asserting itself over against others but rather in the vulnerability of being radically open to them. To a world where untold violence arises from the self-assertion of individuals and communities, the life of faith is one where, in the words of the apostle Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me".¹⁸ This great paradox that it is in losing our life that we gain it, that it is in death that we find life, is the key to reconciliation. For it both affirms who we are and impels us to open ourselves to others and to find our future with them. As David Stevens

¹⁶ Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, p. 173.

¹⁷ John Webster, "The Ethics of Reconciliation," in E. Gunton ed., *The Theology of Reconciliation*, London & New York: T. & T. Clark, 2003, p. 117.

¹⁸ Galatians 2:20.

comments: "We are able to make space for the other because Christ has made space for us. While we are made one in Christ particular identities are not abolished but they are relativized and subordinated. This new identity in Christ leaves no room for individual or collective claims of superiority or self-righteousness. Reconciliation in Christ is about being freed from anxiety about identity. We do not have to shore up our own selfhood or self-esteem. We are to trust in the goodness and grace of God."¹⁹

The new centre found in Jesus Christ, writes Miroslav Volf, "opens the self up, makes it capable and willing to give itself for others and to receive others in itself."²⁰ As nations and peoples are disciplined, they express themselves in the kind of self-giving love in which Christ found his identity and purpose and in which our world may find true hope today. The way of Christ tells us, writes Alan Lewis, that "trust, defencelessness, and vulnerability are in themselves, despite all appearances, finally more productive and protective than all stratagems for aggression or defence, attack or retaliation, self-assertion or self-protection." Following Christ means being willing "to lead risky, unprotected, costly lives, open to others and committed to self-expenditure on their behalf."²¹ It is because they share this faith-perspective that churches working together as partners in mission have such great potential in the resolution of conflict and the achievement of reconciliation.

Conclusion

Christian mission today might seem just as unlikely to be a force for reconciliation in inter-communal conflict as did the Scottish missionaries among the Tonga and Ngoni in the 1880s. Yet in the gospel there are resources to relativize every human source of identity, to reach across every division through active partnership, and to witness to the healing

¹⁹ David Stevens, "A Time to Heal: Perspectives on Reconciliation and Overcoming Violence," *Connections*, Vol. 6 (2002) No 2, p. 32.

²⁰ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, p. 71.

²¹ Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, pp. 321, 454.

and transformation found in God's grace. Could there be any more convincing demonstration of the authentic meaning of Christian mission today than to live out the elements of the gospel that make for reconciliation among divided and hostile communities?

9. Christian Mission in the 21st Century: Discerning Direction

A focal point for consideration of the direction of Christian mission in the 21st century came with the centenary of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference in 2010. This chapter comprises an essay that was prompted by this centenary and attempts to suggest the lines along which Christian mission might be shaped in the century ahead.

A Great Reversal: the West as Mission Field

The flagship Commission One of the Edinburgh 1910 conference was entitled "Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World". It was based on a simple binary concept: there was a "Christian world" which had been fully evangelised and there was a "Non-Christian" World that was bereft of the gospel. These two "worlds" were geographically understood: Europe and North America was the "Christian World" while Asia and Africa formed the "Non-Christian" World. (It was agreed not to discuss areas like Latin America that did not fit neatly into this binary division.) On this conception, the project of the missionary movement was essentially very simple: "carrying" the gospel from where it was well established to areas where it was unknown. Beyond the wildest imagination of the delegates was the possibility that within 100 years the geography of Christianity could turn by almost 180 degrees. As Scottish mission historian Andrew Walls writes, "By a huge reversal of the position in 1910, the majority of Christians now live in Africa, Asia, Latin America or the Pacific, and ... the proportion is rising. Simultaneously with the retreat from Christianity in the West in the twentieth century went – just as the visionaries of Edinburgh hoped – a massive accession to the Christian faith in the non-Western world. The map of the Christian Church, its demographic and cultural make-up, changed more dramatically during the twentieth century than (probably) in any other since the first."¹

¹ Andrew F. Walls, "Commission One and the Church's Transforming Century," Lecture at "Towards 2010" Conference, University of Edinburgh, October 2002.

The stark geographical framework that guided the 1910 Conference is clearly not serviceable today. However, it is abundantly clear that there has been a recession in Christianity in the West while the faith has spread prodigiously in the great continents of the South. While there are formidable challenges facing the young churches of the South, there is no mistaking the fact that they demonstrate a vitality and a confidence which is almost completely absent in the historic churches of Europe. No wonder that the missionary and ecumenical leader Lesslie Newbigin liked to quote General Simatoupong of Indonesia: "Of course, the number one question is: can the West be converted?"² A further question is what part, if any, the Christian faith of the South will play as an agent of such conversion? There is growing talk today of "mission in reverse," i.e., to use Edinburgh 1910 language, the gospel is being "carried" from the South to the West. Without any question, large-scale migration from the South to the West is taking place and many of the migrants bring their faith with them.

Migration – People of Faith on the Move

Migration and mission ran together in the 19th and 20th centuries but, though overlapping, they could be distinguished from one another. This is becoming ever less the case. The people who take the faith from one place to another are more often migrants or refugees than missionaries in the traditional Western sense. Dynamic witness to Jesus Christ is borne by a criss-crossing pattern of diasporic communities spread across the face of the earth. As Andrew Walls has observed: "The great new fact of our time – and it has momentous consequences for mission – is that the great migration has gone into reverse. There has been a massive movement, which all indications suggest will continue, from the non-Western to the Western world."³ Among those on the move are the refugees uprooted by the many conflicts that have afflicted the developing world in recent times. Despite the widespread resentment against immigrants from the South and the barriers put in their path, it seems safe to predict

² Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Mission*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, p. 66.

³ Andrew F. Walls, "Mission and Migration: The Diaspora Factor in Christian History," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 5/2 (December 2002), p. 10.

that South-to-North migration will continue to occur on a massive scale for the foreseeable future. So long as many of the migrants are people of profound and adventurous Christian faith, the potential of this vast movement to contribute to worldwide missionary engagement is enormous.

For example, there can be little doubt that immigration has dramatically changed the character of Christianity in Europe today. It has been estimated that there are more than three million Christians of African origin living in Europe. This introduces quite a new composition to church life in Europe. As German theologian Walter Hollenweger observes: "Christians in Britain prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black."⁴ The largest congregation in London is a Nigerian-founded one. Such congregations build on a particular diaspora but need not be restricted to it. The Embassy for the Blessed Kingdom of God to All Nations in Kiev, founded by Sunday Adelaja of Nigeria and now the largest congregation in Europe, has reached many indigenous Ukrainians with the message of Christ. In Cologne the largest worshipping congregation is Korean. The widely held expectation that Christianity in Europe is fading away and disappearing may face a strong challenge as immigrants bring a dynamic new missionary movement to the heart of the continent. However, they still have to answer the question as to whether they can carry out a cross-cultural mission that addresses the gospel to the particular context of Europe today.

The Poor as the Primary Agents of Mission

One of the sharpest critiques of the Western missionary movement was published by Anglican missionary Roland Allen almost 100 years ago. In a book called *Missionary Methods St Paul's or Ours?* he contrasted the Pauline mission which was powerless in worldly terms and therefore dependent on the Holy Spirit with what he saw as the alliance of the modern missionary movement with the power of the Western world.⁵

⁴ Walter J. Hollenweger, "Foreword" in Geldoff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies*, Vol. I, p. ix.

⁵ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods St Paul's or Ours: A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces*, London: Robert Scott, 1912.

Were Allen alive today he might be surprised to see that the identification of Christianity with the powerful is increasingly a thing of the past. More and more the agents of Christian mission come from among the weak, the broken and the vulnerable. It is a new kind of agency but is it not one that has greater affinity to Paul – and to Jesus – than the form of missionary presence which often appeared to be allied to imperial power and economic exploitation? Increasingly, we see a situation emerging that is quite opposite to the one which troubled Roland Allen. Swept by unmerciful currents of history, Christian believers bear witness to the suffering Lord in whom they find the strength to meet adversity. A new (or recovered) pattern of missionary activity is emerging in which the poor take the gospel to the rich. Africa is the world's poorest continent and unsurprisingly the one from which the greatest number of migrants originate. It is also the continent with the most vibrant expansion of Christian faith. Hence many migrants come from the new heartlands of Christianity and bring the flame of faith to the old centres in the north where the fire is burning low. As Tokunboh Adeyemo of Kenya, general secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, has remarked, Africa has made the transition "from mission field to missionary force".⁶ What will be the effect of this 21st century movement of mission? It is hard to say but it certainly looks already very different from the one that prevailed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Jehu Hanciles of Sierra Leone has observed: "This non-Western missionary movement represents mission *beyond Christendom*: mission de-linked from structures of power and domination; mission undertaken from positions of vulnerability and need; mission freed from the bane of territoriality and one-directional expansion from a fixed centre; mission involving agents who reflect the New Testament reference to the 'weak things of the world' (I Corinthians 1:27)."⁷ The organisational pattern of mission also starts to look quite different from that which prevailed in the Western missionary movement. There is no mistaking the fact that

⁶ Tokunboh Adeyemo, cit. Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008, p. 218.

⁷ Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, p. 369.

the gospel is spreading through migratory movements but there is no sign of anything like a missionary society. There is no head office, no organising committee, no command structure, no centralised fund, no comprehensive strategic direction. It appears to be a disorganised movement of individuals making their own connections, developing their own perspectives and functioning within networks that they themselves have constructed. It has been characterised as a liquid movement, lacking in solid structures.

How could the older missionary movement productively relate to the new pattern? What forms of connection and association will provide unity and synergy for such a diverse movement of faith? Samuel Escobar of Peru has thrown down the challenge: "The Holy Spirit seems to be at work especially in the periphery of the world, giving Christian people a vision and mobilizing them for local and global mission in spite of poverty, lack of experience and absence of training. On almost every continent migration movements have brought to cities, and industrial or commercial centres, legions of mission minded lay people from Third World churches. The spiritual warmth and the sacrificial commitment of those whose parents or grandparents had been recent converts from other faiths, or from a dead nominal form of Christianity, is rejuvenating old established forms of Christendom. If this is the way the Spirit is moving, what needs to be done in order to walk in step with his reviving and transforming activity? What kinds of global partnerships have to be imagined and developed for this new stage of mission history?"⁸

Time to Hear the Gospel "as if for the first time"

A deep challenge for European churches is that they have been accustomed to being "in control" of the Christian message and its expression in church life. The opportunity to go into learning mode and discover from the experience of others new ways of understanding, experiencing and communicating the gospel is not easily grasped. American scholar Christine Pohl observes that: "... it is easy for people from more privileged settings to imagine that resources and assets flow one way; they

⁸ Samuel Escobar, "Mission from Everywhere to Everyone: The Home Base in a New Century," in Kerr & Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, pp. 185-98 [194].

easily overlook the gifts of guests and strangers. At times, people familiar with the role of host resist strangers' and guests' desire to give, and resist any acknowledgement that they themselves might have needs."⁹

The extent of this challenge to learn again the meaning of the gospel by responding to a new global movement of Christian faith is explained by American China specialist Philip Wickeri: "... the most dynamic sections of Christianity today are in movements emerging outside its established centres: The African Initiated Churches (or AICs), Pentecostals all over the world; the rural churches of China; new indigenous Christian communities throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. They represent a popular Christianity, a mission from below, a mission of transformation. Their emphasis is on oral tradition, lay leadership and maximised participation confront historic Protestant churches with our carefully scripted, over-clericalized approaches to church life.... Those of us from the historic Protestant churches need to be in dialogue with popular Christianity, both to share our understanding of the gospel with each other, and also to better understand and learn from the spirit which moves new Christian communities."¹⁰ By a process that is hard to define precisely, the gospel of Christ has somehow become stale in Western communities where once it was utterly compelling and infinitely inspiring. Could the answer be to hear the gospel set in a new tone and declared by new voices?

Post-modernity: Today's New Cultural Frontier for the Gospel?

In today's world there is no mistaking the fact that there are powerful intellectual and cultural forces, often described as post-modern, which shape the way people think and organise their economic, social, political and personal life. By and large, where post-modernity prevails, the Christian faith has tended to recede, notably in Europe and sectors of society

⁹ Christine D. Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXI/1 (January 2003), p. 13.

¹⁰ Philip L. Wickeri, "Mission from the Margins: The *Missio Dei* in the Crisis of World Christianity," *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 93 No. 369 (April 2004), p. 195.

elsewhere which are influenced by European cultural values. No consideration of "the West as mission field" would be complete without taking account of the strength of post-modernity as the prevailing culture. With its suspicion of "meta-narratives," its hostility to the supernatural and its instinctive questioning of absolutes, it might appear entirely inimical to Christian faith. The experience of cross-cultural mission, however, suggests that a more nuanced approach may be required.

In the missionary's experience of learning a new language and seeking to communicate the gospel in a new language, there were invariably two stages. The first was one of frustration, where the missionary was painfully aware of his or her inability to communicate the gospel message in accustomed terms. The second stage was the wonderfully liberating one when the missionary realized that the new language was opening up all kinds of new insights into the meaning of the gospel, sometimes turning received understandings upside down. To reach that second stage it was necessary for the missionary to enter deeply into the language and culture, to esteem it, to come to love it. Only through such experience will the faith be commended to the peoples of the West in the new cultural context into which they have entered. But to reach that stage requires the missionary sense of adventure that enters the vulnerability of a new place with the confidence that the gospel of Christ can be translated into the native idiom.

Right on the doorstep of the church in Europe today there is a cultural gulf to be crossed, a new language into which to translate the gospel, a new missionary frontier to cross, a new idolatry to combat. It may ultimately be necessary to criticise a post-modern, relativistic, hedonistic culture from a Christian point of view but criticism should not be the first or the only approach to be taken. Just as the nineteenth-century missionaries had to learn, often the hard way, that the societies in which they found themselves were not all bad and that indeed they often had much to teach the missionary, so it will be a surprise if the postmodern Western societies do not possess features that will make possible a new, revealing, and energizing appropriation of the gospel of Christ. Is not such a new cultural frontier one that excites the Christian imagination?

No More Bad Religion – the Cry for Authenticity

One obstacle to be overcome is the fact the religion has had a bad press – often deservedly so. People have been dismayed to see religion being used ideologically to undergird political injustice or military aggression. They have noted that adherence to differing faiths is often, apparently, at the root of the most intractable and destructive conflicts in the modern world. They have also witnessed faith being reduced to a commodity, losing its transcendent reference and being treated as a marketable product to serve the interests of those who "own" it. The abusive and exploitative use of religion has, understandably, caused extensive disillusionment – to the extent that it has become difficult in some quarters even to get a hearing for the gospel of Christ. What is required is not so much a new form of words as a translation of the gospel into a lived reality that vouches for its authenticity. As Indian mission leader Ken Gnanakan has written: "While there is need to renew our allegiance to proclaim the word faithfully, there is greater need to flesh the message out in acts that express this kingdom. Proclamation is urgent, but demonstration is the priority. The world must hear the message of the Kingdom, but it will also want to see some concrete demonstration of this message."¹¹

In a lecture given as part of the "Towards 2010" process in Edinburgh, Korean theologian Kyo-Seong Ahn proposed that, in contrast to the orthodoxy and orthopraxis which have characterized earlier periods of missionary engagement, today what is required is "orthopathy". This involves proclaiming the genuine truth "not from the head, not from the hand, but from the heart". Its keynotes are: relationship, emotional intelligence, symbiosis, community, interdependence, pathos and respect. This pathos-oriented missiology does not try to dictate or manipulate, but tries to respect others. What is indispensable in doing mission, is respect for the other human being, because with respect, a human being can keep his or her dignity in any situation. On this understanding of the task of mission, the love which makes for community is at the same time

¹¹¹¹ Ken Gnanakan, "To Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom," in Walls and Ross, *Mission in the 21st Century*, p. 9.

the action of evangelism.¹² Self-emptying, humility and sacrifice are sorely needed to liberate the gospel from captivity to projects of self-aggrandisement. It may be at the level of pathos that the gospel will be seen in its true colours and show its converting power. Perhaps it always has been.

The Advent of a Pentecostal Age

Little did the delegates gathered for the Edinburgh 1910 conference think that they stood at the dawn of an age of renewal in Christian spirituality that would come to be known as the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. Yet just at the time they were meeting there was evidence of this renewed spirituality in such places as Azusa Street in Los Angeles where an influential early Pentecostal movement was led by the African American preacher William Seymour from 1906, Valparaíso in Chile where the preaching of Willis C. Hoover prompted a Pentecostal revival from 1909, or in West Africa where in 1910 William Wade Harris began the prophetic ministry which would soon result in a mass movement of conversion. Through such initiatives a new form of worship began to emerge, marked by drumming and dancing, exuberance and ecstasy, healing and exorcism. It was a recovery of the spiritual character of Christianity and hence recalled the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. "In the turn it took in its post-Western phase," comments Yale-based Gambian scholar Lamin Sanneh, "charismatic religion was more than a spacey rhapsodic binge, just as its effects went far beyond wild spectacles and heady excitement. The West insisted that worship must be of a God who was intellectualizable, because intellectual veracity was the safeguard against mystification and superstition. Yet for Africans, the call for explanation was not equal in its drawing power to the appeal of the living God before whose eternal mystery explanation must exhaust itself in worship. Only the reality of a transformed spiritual life could commune with God, which, in part, was the need that the African charismatic movement existed to meet. The religious experience is about

¹² Kyo-Seong Ahn, "From Mission to Church and Beyond: the Metamorphosis of post-Edinburgh Christianity," Lecture to "Towards 2010" Conference, University of Edinburgh, October 2003.

intimacy, connection, trust, discovery, and an ethical life in community and solidarity."¹³

Not only in Africa but also in much of Asia and Latin America this intensely spiritual expression of Christian faith has proved compelling for large numbers of people. It taps into traditional religiosity much more effectively than the more cerebral approach of churches in the West and, for many, has offered a greater sense of authenticity in worship and discipleship. Considering the Ghanaian context, Cephas Omenyo points out that: "Charismatics are rooted in African culture in the sense that they respond to specific spiritual needs of Africans which emerge from the core of their culture (the primal worldview). The charismatic renewal thus allows participants to express their deepest religious longings. Therefore, charismatic theology is somehow a 'liberation theology', which is designed for Africans by Africans who are searching for an authentic Christian solution to questions emanating from realities in their context."¹⁴ Omenyo makes the point that this spirituality is no longer confined to Pentecostal churches. There is "Pentecost outside Pentecostalism" as many mainline churches in the global South embrace aspects of Pentecostal worship and spirituality.

According to the World Christian Database, more than 600 million people belong to Pentecostal-Charismatic churches.¹⁵ Many more continue to belong to "mainline" churches but embrace Pentecostal-type spirituality. On any reckoning it is a large-scale religious development and the fastest growing movement in Christianity today. Its strength is on the ground where it demonstrates a remarkable capacity to spawn fresh movement. It does not emphasize central organisation or international governance structure so it is not always easy to identify representative institutions or

¹³ Lamin Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 193.

¹⁴ Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana*, Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2006, p. 296.

¹⁵ David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson & Peter F. Crossing, "Missiometrics 2008: Reality Checks for Christian World Communions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 32 no. 1 (January 2008), p. 30.

leaders. Nonetheless it is apparent that a Pentecostal age has dawned, bringing new vitality to Christian witness in many parts of the world. It may be that it is with this movement that the future of Christian mission lies.

Conflict and reconciliation

Perhaps there is no point at which the credibility of Christian faith is more on the line than in regard to its claim to offer a "ministry of reconciliation". The claim of Christian mission, that it is in the business of reconciliation, is put to the test by the reality of a world where religion is often at the root of the most intractable conflicts. As American scholar Philip Jenkins comments: "However much this would have surprised political analysts a generation or two ago, the critical political frontiers around the world are decided not by attitudes toward class or dialectical materialism, but by rival concepts of God."¹⁶ The ideological role played by religion in situations of conflict can very quickly subvert the imperative for peace and reconciliation that lies at the heart of biblical faith. If Christian mission is not able to function credibly as a force for reconciliation, then its claims are soon going to look hollow. It also faces a rival strategy. The thesis of the "war on terrorism" is that the hegemony of the Western powers, enforced by overwhelming military superiority, will be able to eradicate all unsanctioned violence. This has led to a massive militarisation in the West and a tendency to see the military solution as the first, or even the only, option in any situation of conflict. "When all you have is hammers, everything looks like a nail." This throws down the challenge to the churches to show what tools they have in their toolbox which can be used to find more promising answers to the problems posed by the conflicts of our time. An important measure of the authenticity of the church's witness will be the degree to which it is able to function as an agent of reconciliation.

This is a critical issue for Christian witness since reconciliation is a central biblical paradigm in the declaration of the meaning of Christ's coming. The reconciliation with God, which is the heart of the gospel, is insepara-

¹⁶ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 163.

bly linked with reconciliation with one's fellow human beings, no matter what may have been the cause of alienation, division or conflict. Hence from its earliest beginnings, Christian faith has functioned as a force that brought together people who hitherto had been locked in irresolvable antagonism. It has proved, in context after context, that: "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). To be true to itself, Christian faith has to give expression to this feature of its core meaning. It needs to insistently point beyond the paradigm of protective security to the Christian vision of mutual dependency and vulnerability in which security and hope for all may be sustained. To do so in today's world means stubbornly, tirelessly working to bridge the divides that make for conflict. The inner personal experience of reconciliation with God through Christ has to find expression in spiritual practices that create space for truth, for justice, for healing and for new departures.

Plurality of Religions

Edinburgh 1910 is remembered for promoting an understanding of other religions that was highly progressive for its day. One hundred years later, the question of inter-religious relations is close to the top of the agenda for anyone concerned with world affairs. In 1910 there was great confidence among missionaries in the superiority of Christianity as a religion and an expectation that the other ancient religions would fade away in face of the Christian advance. Today, by contrast, it is apparent that all faiths have been renewing their life and mission. Contrary to the expectations of earlier secularization theory, the advent of modernity has not, in much of the world, been accompanied by the abandonment of religion. In fact, many people have become more fervent and devoted in their faith. So much so that religious fervour often spills over into violent aggression against the adherents of another faith. As German theologian Hans Küng has argued, if there is to be peace in the world there must first be peace among the religions.

The challenge for proponents of Christian mission is how to hold in balance the peace imperative and the evangelistic imperative. Clearly both have deep roots in the biblical faith. Jesus *both* blessed the peacemakers *and* commanded his followers to proclaim the good news to all nations. Many Christians have opted to give priority to either one emphasis or the

other to the extent that this has become one of the most divisive questions in the churches today. The time has come to confront this polarity. In order to properly understanding core features of Christian belief such as the Trinity, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, salvation and conversion there is need for these to be considered in light of the plurality of religions. There are also a host of practical questions around evangelism, proselytization, dialogue and encounter. Here it is a significant challenge to ensure that other faiths are not discussed in the absence of their representatives. While Christian faith must be true to its own integrity, this includes ensuring that representatives of other faiths have the opportunity to explain matters in their own terms. As a minimum, any discussion of the relations between religions must take place in a context of respectful listening to one another.

Stewardship of the Environment

Until recently concern for the natural order was often absent from the prevailing understanding of Christian mission. The focus was on the salvation offered to humankind through the coming, dying and rising of Jesus Christ and the new inter-human relationships that this makes possible. Questions concerning the salvation and reconciliation of human beings were abstracted from the earth from which they draw their life. There was therefore little evidence of concern among proponents of Christian mission for the integrity of the natural order. Moreover, this was not only a sin of omission. The Western missionary movement was closely allied to a commercial enterprise that sought to make profit from new resources and new markets with little thought for the future of the environment. The ecological crisis now finding expression in rapid global warming has exposed the inadequacy of a vision of the future that failed to take account of the threats to the planet posed by the expansion of the modern industrial economy.

The extent of the calamity already taking effect through climate change, water scarcity, rising sea levels and desertification has awoken missionary thinkers and strategists to a challenge ignored for too long. It has provoked a re-reading of the Bible and a rediscovery of the fundamental reality that God loves the whole creation and embraces it in his saving purposes. There has been a move from a personal to a cosmic view of salvation that is far-reaching in its implications for mission. It has led to

practical repentance as individuals have examined their lifestyles and adopted more responsible and sustainable ways of life. It has generated missionary initiatives that have stewardship of the environment at their heart. Each context is engaged in a way that takes full account of its ecological dimensions. Restoring a sound relationship with the earth forms a key strand in a viable missionary strategy for our time. Caring for creation, as a theological imperative, may be a key way to witness to Christ and commend the gospel in today's world.

The Scandal of Poverty

Awareness of climate change has thrown into relief the obscene inequality that prevails in the global economy. It is not the wealthy but rather the poor who suffer the immediate negative effects of global warming because a part of poverty is often being forced to live on marginal land that is vulnerable to natural disasters. By and large, the world's poorest communities have made the least contribution to causing global warming. Yet it is they who are already struggling to feed their families as a result of climate change. It is in the interests of everyone to act to counter global warming but, for those with the cause of the poor at heart, there is an added imperative. Unless we act now we can say goodbye to the vision of a world free from poverty. There is a window of opportunity that within ten years may be closed. Action on climate change must be allied to efforts to resolve the debt crisis, create just trade rules and increase well-targeted aid if real hope of defeating poverty is to be within reach for the 2.8 billion people who are living on less than \$2 a day.

Taking up the biblical imperative to combat poverty that threatens human dignity, the churches have a mandate to speak out for justice. Yet this is not a matter of armchair observation. Rather, prophetic critique is forged through solidarity on the ground. Since the World Bank's "Voices of the Poor" project of the late 1990s, it has increasingly been recognised that "faith-based organisations" play a vital role in combating poverty in the Global South. Many, against all the odds, have continued to offer hope, to provide health and educational services, and to promote development in some of the least resourced communities in the world. Highly funded and highly acclaimed donor-driven development projects have come and gone, often with little to show at the end of the day. Meanwhile the churches continue, from a meagre resource base, to provide

essential social services and to inspire fresh initiatives in development within the poor communities that they serve.

The potential significance of the churches' role should not be underestimated. As Sojourners leader Jim Wallis has stated: "For the first time in history we have the information, knowledge, technology, and resources to bring the worst of global poverty to an end. What we don't have is the moral and political will to do so. And it is becoming clear that it will take a new moral energy to create the political will. I believe the religious communities of the world could provide the 'tipping point' in the struggle to eliminate the world's most extreme poverty. Faith communities could provide the crucial social leadership the world desperately needs, and I don't see where else that prophetic leadership might come from."¹⁷ With their eschatological imagination, the churches are uniquely well-placed to sustain the conviction that "another world is possible". When others flag or become disillusioned by apparently immovable resistance to positive change, the churches are energised by faith in the promise that the purpose of God revealed in Jesus Christ will ultimately find expression in the new world which God will bring to birth.

Local Initiative and World Mission

Whereas in Edinburgh 1910 it was the Missionary Societies and Mission Boards of the Western Protestant Churches that were regarded as the primary agents of the evangelistic task, in 2010 it is the local congregation with which initiative lies. "The primary centre of evangelism...", stated Lesslie Newbigin, "is the local congregation. The congregation should live by the true story and centre their life in the continual remembering and relating of the true story, in meditating on it, and expounding its meaning in relation to contemporary events so that contemporary events are truly understood, and in sharing in the sacrament by which we are incorporated into the dying and rising of Jesus so that we are at the very heart of the true story."¹⁸ The growing churches of the Global South have amply demonstrated the strength of the local congregation as agent

¹⁷ Wallis, *God's Politics*, p. 270.

¹⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Mission*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, p. 156.

of evangelism. Congregations grow to the point where they have to split or plant daughter congregations that in turn undergo the same process.

In the Global North, post-modern culture has featured growing distrust in large, centrist institutions and a new orientation to the individual and the local. This finds expression in church life as, even in an area like international mission, congregations are less inclined to leave the initiative with a national board or missionary society and more inclined to take direct action themselves, seeking to work on a local-to-local basis. This has been an energising development and has brought mission and evangelism close to the heart of local congregational life, rather than being regarded as something to be left to a few dedicated professionals. It presents a considerable challenge, however, in regard to forming a coherent strategy for the task of worldwide evangelisation. Is it time for military-type planning to be set aside in favour of a confidence that the gospel, commended by a vast diversity of communities and movements which believe it, will continue to cross new frontiers and reach "unto the ends of the earth"? In that case, what kind of national and international structures, if any, are needed to support and promote the world mission of the church?

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism – Church Unity and Christian Diversity

Edinburgh 1910 has been a symbol of the church's quest for unity. The deep yearning for greater unity that arose from the missionary experience gave rise to the Ecumenical Movement – something that inspired millions throughout the 20th century. The movement took institutional form – in united churches, national councils of churches and international ecumenical bodies. It peaked in the mid-20th century. This was the time when a number of significant united churches were formed, with the Church of South India as an inspiring example. Others came close but did not achieve the desired union. In fact, as the century advanced it apparently became more difficult to attain union. Churches rooted themselves more firmly in their own distinctive traditions. This, in turn, weakened their commitment to ecumenical bodies and the early 21st century has seen a steady down-scaling of both national and international ecumenical instruments. At the same time, it is not possible to be true to the New Testament and be unconcerned about the unity of the church. The

ecumenical impulse has to find some new form of expression. As a wide range of churches and ecumenical bodies embraced Edinburgh 2010, it was soon apparent that they did not wish to create any formal organisation but preferred to function as a "network". How far can a network go in expressing the oneness of the church for which Christ prayed?

It is also a dramatically new context for the exercise of ecumenism. There are large-scale expressions of Christian faith that barely existed in 1910. Pentecostal and independent churches are a diffuse movement, functioning without any headquarters, yet they number their members in hundreds of millions. How are they to be engaged in a new form of ecumenism that is attuned to new dynamics of church life? In this context there is perhaps a new dividing line that will engage ecumenical energy: the difference in ethos between Western and Southern Christianity. As Philip Jenkins has pointed out: "Southern Christianity, the Third Church, is not just a transplanted version of the familiar religion of the older Christian states: the New Christendom is no mirror image of the Old. It is a truly new and developing entity. Just how different from its predecessor remains to be seen."¹⁹ Debates in the Anglican Communion over sexuality have revealed something of the extent of the differences that are possible. Moreover, while sexuality is the presenting issue, it is apparent that the debate rests on deeper issues of authority: who says what the standards are in doctrinal and ethical matters? The challenge of numerous and vibrant Southern Christianity to the assumptions and premises of "Old Christendom" brings a new frontier to the ecumenical arena. As Cuban theologian Justo Gonzales shrewdly observes: "The encounter of cultures in our midst is often also an encounter of various ways of being Christian. The cultural conflicts of our time are also conflicts within the church."²⁰ Will there be a fragmentation into a variety of Christianities that scarcely recognise one another? Or will a new ecumenism find ways to celebrate diversity while affirming unity in inspiring and energising ways?

¹⁹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 214.

²⁰ Justo L. Gonzales, *For the Healing of the Nations: The Book of Revelation in an Age of Cultural Conflict*, New York: Orbis, 1999, p. 19.

Rediscovering the Gospel

Edinburgh 1910 was, in John Mott's evocative phrase, an occasion when a "larger Christ" came into view. Might we look back on Edinburgh 2010 as representing a new appreciation of the identity and significance of Jesus Christ? The answer to this question may depend on how effectively the centenary has been marked by effective engagement with the questions, challenges and opportunities sketched in this chapter.²¹

²¹ A full assessment can be made by reference to the 37 volumes published in the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series – see www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum/list.php?cat=3 [6 July 2018].

10. Understanding Mission Today – Points of Convergence?

Three Major Mission Statements

For anyone seeking to get abreast of current trends in Christian mission, it might prove useful that some of the work has been done for us. In the years from 2010 to 2013 three large constituencies in world Christianity each offered a comprehensive understanding of mission: the *Cape Town Commitment* (CTC) of the Lausanne Movement in 2010,¹ the World Council of Churches' *Together Towards Life* (TTL) in 2012² and Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) in 2013.³ Something similar happened once before when the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 was quickly followed by the Vatican's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and the WCC's *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*. A generation would pass before there would be another time so auspicious for the preparation of comprehensive statements on the meaning of mission.

This time though it was rather unexpected. I remember in the run-up to Edinburgh 2010 I was on a committee that was considering whether there could be a message from that conference. Everyone was very doubtful – the global church was so fragmented that any statement all could accept would be so bland it would not be worth saying. In the event, Edinburgh 2010 did issue a "Common Call" – just nine sentences

¹ *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (Lausanne Movement, 2011), at: www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment; hereafter CTC.

² Jooseop Keum ed., *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC, 2012); hereafter TTL.

³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, 24 November 2013 (Vatican Press), at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf; hereafter EG.

but powerful and meaningful.⁴ Perhaps a harbinger of what was to follow – the budding of a new convergence.

The three documents are very different from one another in tone and format but what is most striking when you read them is the convergence in terms of content. As John Armstrong remarks: "when you put TTL and CTC together with *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), you might be inclined to become downright giddy about the future of missional-ecumenism in the church."⁵ This lends strength to strategizing in mission studies since where there is a convergence between the three documents in regard to the direction of Christian mission, it almost certainly means that we have identified a point that we need to take into account when it comes to planning. The only qualification to be made is that these are complex and detailed texts so everyone would read them differently. What follows is simply one person's "take" and, of course, open to correction and critique. But perhaps a quick scan of these three major texts can save strategizers from having to re-invent the wheel in terms of tracing current directions in mission. What I hope to identify are some broad trends in regard to the nature and agency of mission followed, more briefly, by an indication of recurrent themes.

Time of Change

First, though, it should be noted that all three documents recognise that we are living through rapidly changing times. CTC begins by stating that, "Almost everything about the way we live, think and relate to one another is changing at an accelerating pace." (Preamble) TTL carries the subtitle *Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. CTC majors on how fast the world is changing, TTL on how fast the church is changing. All three signal that mission today must be considered in a context of

⁴ Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt, *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* Oxford: Regnum and Geneva: WCC, 2016, pp. 144-45.

⁵ John H. Armstrong, "The Church in the Contemporary Ecumenical-Missional Moment: Together towards Life in Dialogue with The Cape Town Commitment and *Evangelii Gaudium*," *International Review of Mission* 104/2 (2015), pp. 232-41 [234].

change. Against, this backdrop CTC affirms that "the mission of God continues..." (Preamble)

The Nature and Agency of Mission

Not Human but Divine

This brings us to our first main point of convergence. The primary agent of mission is not human but divine. As CTC puts it, mission is a matter of, "...the missionary Spirit sent by the missionary Father and the missionary Son, breathing life and power into God's missionary Church" (CTC I 5). EG, for its part, quotes Benedict XVI "It is important always to know that the first word, the true initiative, the true activity comes from God and only by inserting ourselves into the divine initiative, only begging for this divine initiative, shall we too be able to become – with him and in him – evangelizers" (EG112).

Thinking of mission as not primarily a human activity but rather the *missio Dei*, the mission of God, is, of course, a breakthrough that came in the mid-20th century but by now it has become an almost universal premise for thinking of mission. This is particularly apparent in TTL which takes as its starting point: "Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation (TTL2)." What makes TTL rather original is the pneumatological turn that it brings to *missio Dei* thinking, with its first main section being headed "Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life". Though less fundamental to their organization, the emphasis on the power of the Spirit being the driving force of mission is echoed in the other two documents.

Not Professionals but Disciples

When we turn, secondarily, to the human agency in mission a consistent concern is that mission is the business not of professionals but of disciples. The distinction between "disciples" and "missionaries," Pope Francis proposes, is obsolete: "In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals

while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized" (EG120).

The discipleship note was also struck at Cape Town in 2010 when Samuel Escobar and René Padilla urged that what are needed today are not converts but disciples. CTC states in its conclusion: "Biblical mission demands that those who claim Christ's name should be like him, by taking up their cross, denying themselves, and following him in the paths of humility, love, integrity, generosity, and servanthood. To fail in discipleship and disciple-making, is to fail at the most basic level of our mission." (Conclusion)

This puts the focus on the everyday lives of the followers of Christ. As CTC states: "There is no biblical mission without biblical living." (CTC I 6) "A true missionary," states Pope Francis, "never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him" (EG266). TTL puts the matter in spiritual terms: "Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives the deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions." (TTL3) Large parts of all three documents are taken up with consideration of spirituality and authentic discipleship.

Not Individual but Ecclesial

A further point, however, is that agency in mission is not primarily individual but rather ecclesial. There is significant emphasis on the church as agent of mission, particularly in TTL and EG. It was one of the ground-breaking insights of Vatican II that, "the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature". In *Ad Gentes* it was a theological declaration. With EG, it becomes a concrete pastoral programme of action: we need to move "from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry" (EH15) Or, more vividly, Francis says, "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security." (EH49)

The pope is forthright on this point: "I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that

the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation." (EG27). As Steve Bevans remarks: "This is a real Copernican revolution, for it puts everything in perspective of mission and the reign of God."⁶

If so, a similar Copernican revolution is advanced by TTL: "It is not the church that has a mission but rather the mission that has a church.... Thus the churches mainly and foremost need to be missionary churches." (TTL58) TTL also takes this down to local level: "local congregations are frontiers and primary agents of mission." (TTL 73) In Lesslie Newbigin's famous phrase, the local congregation needs to be a "hermeneutic of the gospel"⁷ – an embodiment of the gospel message - before it can be proclaimed credibly.

Not Orthodoxy, Not Orthopraxis but Orthopathy

While we are on the subject of embodying the gospel, another point worth noting is a new emphasis on the affective or emotional dimension of life. I was first alerted to this in one of the lectures in the run-up to Edinburgh 2010 when Kyo-Seong Ahn argued that, in contrast to the orthodoxy and orthopraxis that characterized earlier periods of missionary engagement, today what is required is "orthopathy". This involves proclaiming the genuine truth "not from the head, not from the hand, but from the heart". Its keynotes are relationship, emotional intelligence, symbiosis, community, interdependence, pathos and respect.⁸

It is striking that EG, as the title suggests, is set in the key of joy, right from the opening words: "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew." (EG1) It further observes that, "our technologi-

⁶ Stephen Bevans SVD, "Life, Joy, and Love: Together towards Life in Dialogue with Evangelii Gaudium and The Cape Town Commitment," *International Review of Mission* 104/2 (2015), pp. 193-202 [197].

⁷ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, p. 232.

⁸ Kyo-Seong Ahn, "From Mission to Church and Beyond: the Metamorphosis of Post-Edinburgh Christianity," in Kerr and Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, p. 84.

cal society has succeeded in multiplying occasions of pleasure, yet has found it very difficult to engender joy".

EG also makes much of tenderness, affirming that, "With a tenderness which never disappoints but is always capable of restoring our joy [Christ] makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and start anew." (EG3) Certainly EG is much freer with the use of such affective language than the other two documents but might it be at the level of pathos that the gospel will be seen in its true colours and show its converting power?

Recurrent Mission Themes

The following thematic convergences call for consideration.

Creation

The first is creation. Like never before there is an awareness that mission has to be understood in relation to the natural order. Part of the force of TTL's use of the multi-valent biblical term "life" is to speak into the sense that life itself is at stake. CTC expresses the same concern in relation to the Lordship of Christ: "If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth.... Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ." (I 7) EG touches on this too, though it is elaborated much more fully in the 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*.⁹ There is a shared awareness that, as TTL puts it: "we are called to move beyond a narrow human-centred approach and to embrace forms of mission which express our reconciled relationship with all created life." (TTL19)

Justice

The second is justice. All of the documents demonstrate great concern for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, the forgotten and the

⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si – On Care for Our Common Home*, Encyclical Letter, 24 May 2015, at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

disregarded. The word "poor" appears 79 times in EG, which calls for "a church which is poor and for the poor.... (EG198) "Such love for the poor," CTC insists, "demands that we not only love mercy and deeds of compassion, but also that we do justice through exposing and opposing all that oppresses and exploits the poor." (I 7) All three offer substantial critique of the ideology of the global free market and the gross inequalities of today's world.

There is more to this than feeling sorry for the disadvantaged. When writing of the poor, Pope Francis suggests that, "We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them." (EG198) TTL takes this further with its provocative thinking about "mission from the margins". Whereas mission might traditionally have been a movement *from* centres of power seeking to reach the marginalized, TTL proposes a reversal of this arrangement: "People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view." (TTL38)

Evangelism

Thirdly, evangelism is prominent in all of the documents. TTL has an entire section that begins by stating, "Evangelism is mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ without setting limits to the saving grace of God. It seeks to share this good news with all who have not yet heard it and invites them to an experience of life in Christ." (TTL80) It continues, "Evangelism ... focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including 'the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship'." (TTL81) Pope Francis quotes words of his predecessor, which, he says, take us to the very heart of the Gospel: "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (EG7).

At the same time, all are concerned to distance themselves from proselytization or any unethical practices that might have been associated with the practice of evangelism. On the contrary, as CTC explains, "We must *proclaim* the truth. Spoken proclamation of the truth of the gospel remains paramount in our mission. This cannot be separated from living out the truth. Works and words must go together." (II I 1) "If our words

are not consistent with our actions," warns TTL, "our evangelism is inauthentic." (TTL86) This ties in with the "missionary discipleship" mentioned earlier.

Migration

Fourthly, migration is highlighted as a defining reality of our time. As TTL states, "Migration has become a worldwide, multi-directional phenomenon which is reshaping the Christian landscape." (TTL5) All the documents refer to issues of justice that are raised by migration as well as implications for the life of churches. TTL perhaps goes furthest in critical missiological thinking by suggesting that "God's hospitality calls us to move beyond binary notions of culturally dominant groups as hosts and migrant and minority peoples as guests. Instead, in God's hospitality, God is host and we are all invited by the Spirit to participate with humility and mutuality in God's mission." (TTL71) Are migrants the missionaries of today?

Religious Plurality

Fifthly, religious plurality features in all documents, as you might expect of a topic that has always been challenging in considerations of mission. At one level this is an area of consensus since the WCC, the Vatican and the WEA co-published the text *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, which is cited in TTL.¹⁰ All would concur with CTC that "We are called to share good news, but not to engage in unworthy proselytizing.... We therefore reject any form of witness that is coercive, un-ethical, deceptive, or disrespectful." (III 1)

All stress too the importance of dialogue, with EG placing a timely emphasis on Christian-Muslim dialogue. TTL attempts to resolve the long-running polarity between evangelism and dialogue by stating: "Although Christians hope and pray that all people may come to a living knowledge of the Triune God, evangelism is not the purpose of dialogue. However, since dialogue is also 'a mutual encounter of commitments,' sharing the

¹⁰ World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, 2011; cit. TTL, 89.

good news of Jesus Christ has a legitimate place in it." (TTL95) Nonetheless, given the current global context I would suggest that this remains an area where much more needs to be done.

Leadership

Sixthly, leadership. Only CTC has a section specifically devoted to this, headed "Christ-centred Leaders". It points out that, "The rapid growth of the Church in so many places remains shallow and vulnerable, partly because of the lack of disciplined leaders, and partly because so many use their positions for worldly power, arrogant status or personal enrichment." (II IV 3) The same concern, however, is implicit in much of EG and is addressed in the *Practical Guide* that was published along with TTL. Both would chime with the CTC's statement that, "We strongly encourage ... all those who deliver leadership training programmes, to focus more on spiritual and character formation, not only on imparting knowledge or grading performance, and we heartily rejoice in those that already do so as part of comprehensive 'whole person' leadership development."

Conclusion

These points of convergence in regard to the nature, agency and thematic content of Christian mission are offered in the hope that they will prove suggestive and illuminating for all who seek to understand the meaning of mission today and to form strategy accordingly.

Scottish Perspectives

11. The World Missionary Conference 1910: Its Scottish Provenance

For any student of world Christian history, "Edinburgh 1910" is a key reference point. The World Missionary Conference, held in the Scottish capital that year, is probably the best-known ecclesiastical event to have taken place in Scotland and arguably the most influential. John R. Mott the Conference chairman called it: "the most notable gathering in the interest of the worldwide expansion of Christianity ever held, not only in missionary annals, but in all Christian annals."¹ Marking its golden jubilee in 1960, Hugh Martin observed that: "By the general consent of all competent judges the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in June, 1910, was one of the most creative events in the long history of the Christian Church. Its significance is all the more clear in the perspective of fifty years after. In many respects unique in itself, it was also unique in the impetus it gave to Christian activity in many directions. It opened a new era in the missionary enterprise but it was also the beginning of what we now call 'the ecumenical movement'. 'Edinburgh 1910' was in fact a fountain head of international and inter-Church co-operation on a depth and scale never before known."²

This assessment was given at what was perhaps the high-water mark of the ecumenical cooperation that sprang from the Edinburgh 1910 Conference. Yet the passing of a further sixty years has not diminished its significance as a point of reference in regard to world Christianity. As Andrew Walls remarks: "The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910, has passed into Christian legend. It was a landmark in the history of mission; the starting point of the modern theology of mission; the high point of the modern Western missionary movement and the point from which it declined; the launch-pad of the modern ecumenical movement;

¹ Cit. C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott 1865-1955: A Biography*, Geneva and Grand Rapids: WCC and Eerdmans, 1979, p. 342.

² Hugh Martin, *Beginning at Edinburgh: A Jubilee Assessment of the World Missionary Conference 1910*, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1960, p. 3.

the point at which Christians first began to glimpse something of what a world church would be like."³

Why Scotland?

One question that has to be asked is why Edinburgh was chosen to be the location of the Conference? The simple answer is that the Scottish churches offered to host the event. Fairley Daly, the Secretary of the Livingstonia Mission Committee, wrote early in 1906 to Robert Speer, Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in New York, to raise the question of whether plans should be laid to hold a major Missionary Conference following the one which had been held in New York in 1900?⁴ Speer and his American colleagues were positive about a Conference in Great Britain and Scottish foreign mission committees and missionary societies needed no further encouragement to offer to host the Conference in Edinburgh in 1910.⁵ What is more of a question is why the missionary leadership of a such a small nation had the temerity to offer to host a World Conference and why their counterparts elsewhere had confidence to accept the offer? It appears that this confidence was inspired by their understanding of Scotland's standing in the Western missionary movement which was then at its zenith: "Edinburgh was a fitting place of meeting. In the earlier missionary enterprise which evangelised Europe no country was more prominent than Scotland, and no country has in proportion to its size contributed to the evangelisation of the world during the last century so large a number of distinguished and devoted missionaries."⁶ This latter point was emphasised by J.H. Oldham, the Conference Secretary, when he recalled at time of the Jubilee of the Conference that Scotland had been chosen because it was "the native

³ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*, New York and Edinburgh: Orbis and T. & T. Clark, 2000, p. 53.

⁴ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *The History and Records of the Conference*, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, pp. 5-6.

⁵ World Missionary Conference, *History and Records*, p. 6.

⁶ World Missionary Conference, *History and Records*, p. 18.

land of David Livingstone, Alexander Duff and other famous missionaries."⁷

Statistics published by the Conference itself demonstrated that Scotland's involvement in the worldwide missionary enterprise was out of all proportion to its population or economic strength. The 788 societies engaged in missionary work worldwide had a combined income of £5,071,225. The combined income of the 35 Scottish societies was £335,630, 6.6% of the total.⁸ Nearly two-thirds of this income belonged to the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Free Church that was, by any standards, a major player in worldwide mission. Furthermore, it has to be recognised that these figures refer only to Scottish-based missionary societies. Scots and people of Scots descent were also prominent in the significant missionary work of Presbyterian Churches in England, Canada and the USA.

Nor was Scottish missionary engagement confined to Presbyterianism – far from it. The interdenominational London Missionary Society, which from its inception in 1795 was an important pioneer of the missionary enterprise, included among its staff such notable Scots as Robert Moffat,⁹ John Philip,¹⁰ David Livingstone,¹¹ James Legge,¹² John Mackenzie¹³ and James Chalmers.¹⁴ Besides the "big names," James Calder rec-

⁷ J.H. Oldham, "Reflections on Edinburgh 1910," *Religion in Life*, Vol. XXIX (1959-60), pp. 329-38 [329].

⁸ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Statistical Atlas of Christian Missions*, Edinburgh: World Missionary Conference, 1910, p. 58.

⁹ See Bruce Ritchie, "The Missionary Theology of Robert Moffat of Kuruman," Ph.D., University of Malawi, 2006.

¹⁰ See Andrew C. Ross, *John Philip: Missions, Race and Politics in South Africa*, Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986.

¹¹ See Andrew C. Ross, *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire*, London & New York: Hambledon & London, 2002.

¹² See Norman J. Giradot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002; Pfister, *Striving for the "Whole Duty of Man"*.

¹³ See Anthony Sillery, *John Mackenzie of Bechuanaland, 1835-1899: A Study in Humanitarian Imperialism*, Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1971.

ords that in the 1845-1995 period, "... the LMS appointed 548 missionaries. No less than 102 of them were Scots."¹⁵ Scots were to be found within the ranks of the low-church Anglican Church Missionary Society while the Scottish Episcopal Church has an official link with the high-church Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

As well as having a strong base within Scotland itself, Scottish influence was widely diffused within the wider missionary movement.¹⁶ If this is apparent on a quantitative analysis, it is all the more so when considered qualitatively. Mission stations such as Lovedale¹⁷ or Livingstonia¹⁸ and educational institutions such as Wilson College in Bombay¹⁹ or Madras Christian College²⁰ were highly regarded models of missionary engagement, as would be evident in the proceedings of the Conference. Hence there was little question, either in the minds of Scottish missionary leaders or in those of their counterparts elsewhere, that Scotland was an appropriate location for a major world missionary conference.

In the course of the 19th century, the missionary movement had established a degree of credibility in Scotland that enabled it to call on significant resources both from the Churches and from the wider society. Both

¹⁴ See J.M. Hitchen, "Training Tamate: Formation of the Nineteenth Century Missionary Worldview: the Case of James Chalmers," Ph.D., University of Aberdeen, 1984.

¹⁵ James M. Calder, *Scotland's March Past: The Share of Scottish Churches in The London Missionary Society*, London: The Livingstone Press, 1945, p. 10.

¹⁶ See A. F. Walls, "Missions," in Nigel M. de S. Cameron ed., *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993, pp. 567-94, at pp. 573-74.

¹⁷ See Graham A. Duncan, *Lovedale: Coercive Agency*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003.

¹⁸ See John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 2nd ed. Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000.

¹⁹ Elizabeth G.K. Hewat, *Vision and Achievement 1796-1956, A History of the Foreign Missions of the Churches United in the Church of Scotland*, London: Thomas Nelson, 1960, pp. 43-53.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-101.

the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, McAdam Muir, and the Moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland, John Young, were invited delegates at the Conference.²¹ More significantly, several of the leading theological thinkers from both Churches were delegates: David Cairns,²² James Denney,²³ H.A.A. Kennedy,²⁴ A.R. MacEwen,²⁵ W.P. Paterson²⁶ and Alexander Whyte.²⁷ This served to connect the missionary enterprise with mainstream thinking and concern in church life – a significant development for a movement that had earlier been regarded as peripheral and even eccentric.

This development was reinforced by the capacity of the organisers to call on the services of senior figures in the social and political establishment. President of the Conference was Lord Balfour of Burleigh who had recently served in the British Cabinet as Secretary of State for Scotland. Mover of the only formal resolution of the Conference was Sir Andrew Fraser who had recently retired as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. It may be a question whether the Conference was, in fact, too close to the establishment but it is clear that foreign mission had come to have a standing in Scotland which allowed the conference organisers to involve senior statesmen in the leadership of the event.

²¹ World Missionary Conference, *History and Records*, p. 39.

²² See *David Cairns: An Autobiography, Some Recollections of a Long Life and Selected Letters*, edited by his Son and Daughter with a Memoir by D.M. Baillie, London: SCM, 1950.

²³ See John Randolph Taylor, *God Loves Like That! The Theology of James Denney*, London: SCM 1962; James M. Gordon, *James Denney (1856-1917): An Intellectual and Contextual Biography*, Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006.

²⁴ See John Baillie, "Kennedy, Harry Angus Alexander," *Dictionary of National Biography 1931-1940*, ed. L.G. Wickham Legg (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 504-505.

²⁵ See David S. Cairns, *Life and Times of Alexander Robertson MacEwen*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1925.

²⁶ See Clive L. Rawlins ed. *The Diaries of William Paterson Paterson*, Edinburgh: Faith and Life, 1987.

²⁷ See G.F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923.

There was also a movement of popular enthusiasm on which they could draw. Local committees to promote the work of the Conference were formed in all the important towns of Scotland. Public Meetings attracted attendances "varying from 350 to 3,500"²⁸ As the time for the Conference approached the Foreign Mission Committees of the Church of Scotland and the UF Church suggested that "each Presbytery might, at an early meeting, set aside half an hour for intercession on behalf of the Conference..."²⁹ The importance of prayer for the Conference was a constant emphasis and allied to this was the practical need for funds – a sum of £7,000 had to be raised to meet the costs of the conference.³⁰

As Brian Stanley has demonstrated, the Conference did not achieve the upsurge in commitment to the cause of foreign mission for which its advocates had hoped.³¹ It remained a minority pursuit, even within Scottish church life. Nonetheless it was cherished by a minority with sufficient energy and imagination to support and promote a relatively large scale of missionary engagement. Without a significant level of public support it would not have been possible to envisage hosting an event on such a world scale. It also provoked a generous response from Scotland's civic institutions. *The Scotsman* reported that "Edinburgh has received the World Missionary Conference in a manner which is worthy of the best traditions of the Scottish nation. The city, through the Lord Provost and Magistrates, has welcomed them; the Church, within the ancient walls of St Giles', has welcomed them; and the University has honoured them by conferring on representatives of their number its highest distinctions."³² As Timothy Yates acknowledges: "Scotland had certain attributes and

²⁸ World Missionary Conference 1910, *Monthly News Sheet*, March 1910, p. 123.

²⁹ World Missionary Conference 1910, *Monthly News Sheet*, April 1910, p. 144.

³⁰ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Statement of Aims and Plans*, issued by authority of the Committee, no date., p. 5.

³¹ Stanley, "Scotland and the World Missionary Conference.

³² "World Missionary Conference" [by a Contributor], *The Scotsman*, 15 June 1910.

characteristics which made it peculiarly fitting for an epoch-making missionary conference to be held in its capital city."³³

Vision, Diplomacy and Organisation

Scotland was a suggestive base for a World Missionary Conference but this is not to say that it would be successful in organising one. By universal consent, the fact that it did so is attributable, in no small measure, to the remarkable qualities of the Conference Secretary, Joseph Houldsworth Oldham.³⁴ Invalided home at an early age from missionary service in India, Oldham had a mission studies remit from the UF Church when the unexpected call came for him to take up a full-time role as Secretary to the Committee organising the Conference.³⁵ Alarmed by the prospect of a world conference being organised by an exclusively Scottish committee "consisting of fossils,"³⁶ Oldham set about establishing a fully international framework for the organisation of the Conference. Without this vision and the capacity to make it a reality, it is very doubtful if the Conference would have had the epoch-making significance that it did. Along with vision and organisational powers, Oldham demonstrated remarkable gifts of diplomacy. Missionary work generally attracts strong and domineering personalities and Scottish missionaries have not been an exception to this rule. In fact, Adrian Hastings has observed that: "The Church of Scotland missionary, whether of the Established or of the Free Church, had a strong tendency to be insensitively autocratic."³⁷ Oldham was of a different mould, quiet and unassuming. His strength lay in the warm relationships and careful diplomacy that enabled him to hold together a diverse coalition which was not without its jealousies and turf wars.

³³ Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 21.

³⁴ See Keith Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J.H. Oldham*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Geneva: WCC, 1999, pp. 73-99.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-78.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³⁷ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 557.

Perhaps his most notable achievement in this regard was to convince the Anglo-Catholic section of the Church of England to participate, which in turn made it possible for Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to famously address the Conference.³⁸ Hitherto the Anglo-Catholics had kept their distance from conferences dominated by Evangelicals and Non-Conformists. Oldham had the vision to see that their participation would take the Conference to an entirely different level.³⁹ Despite initial favourable signs from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, it seemed that the Anglo-Catholics could not see their way to participate. An overnight stay with Bishop Gore of Birmingham enabled Oldham to turn the situation around. Looking back fifty years later, he commented: "This was the turning point of the ecumenical movement".⁴⁰ Oldham's years as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Oxford, had served well to give him a sympathetic understanding of Anglicanism and this enabled him to mediate between the assertive American approach and the sensitivities of the Church of England. (It is not without significance that Temple Gairdner, influential CMS missionary and the official chronicler of the Conference, had been Oldham's room-mate at Trinity; nor that Randall Davidson also was a Trinity man.)

By the end of 1909 Oldham had established the Conference offices on Princes Street in Edinburgh and had engaged a staff of 29.⁴¹ They faced "the sheer logistical nightmare of arranging the accommodation of over 1,200 visitors in hotels, boarding houses and private homes all over the city."⁴² In the end the entire Conference organisation was a *tour de force*. In a passage oft-quoted in the annals of the Ecumenical Movement, Temple Gairdner in his account of the proceedings of the Conference wrote that:

³⁸ George K. A. Bell, *Randall Davidson: Archbishop of Canterbury*, 3rd ed., London: Oxford University Press, 1952, pp. 572-75.

³⁹ Keith Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J.H. Oldham*, pp. 78-88.

⁴⁰ J.H. Oldham, "Reflections on Edinburgh 1910," *Religion in Life*, Vol. XXIX (1959-60), pp. 329-38 [333].

⁴¹ World Missionary Conference 1910, *Monthly News Sheet*, Dec. 1909, p. 67.

⁴² Keith Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J.H. Oldham*, pp. 88-89.

Just beneath [John R. Mott] at the Committee table, sat the General Secretary of the Conference, J.H. Oldham, a man strangely contrasted with the Chairman. Small of stature, and of unassuming face and mien, he slipped into or out of his place at the table, as one not merely unnoticed but not meriting notice. The Chairman, though he did not intervene in the discussions, at least gave the important closing address, and his voice was frequently and authoritatively heard, but the Secretary, from beginning to end, never opened his lips, save to give out formal notices. Why then was it that the first time he rose to give out a notice, the whole Conference applauded as though it would never cease? Some did so, perhaps, because they wanted to show their appreciation of a triumph of organisation. But those that knew were aware that, more than any other, the spirit that was in this very unobtrusive exterior had been at the back of that great Conference, not merely in respect of its organisation and its methods, but also of its ideals, its aspirations, and its hopes.⁴³

The Work of the Commissions: Scottish Influence

A key role played by Oldham at this deeper level was that of guiding the work of the eight Commissions that would report to the Conference. This was one of the features that set Edinburgh 1910 apart from earlier conferences. Whereas they had concentrated on a demonstration of enthusiasm, Edinburgh aimed to be a working conference, its subtitle being "To consider Missionary Problems in relation to the Non-Christian World".⁴⁴ In order to do this, thorough preparatory work was carried out by eight Commissions on topics established by the Oxford meeting of the International Committee in June 1907.⁴⁵ It can be argued that it was the work of these Commissions that gave the Conference its depth and enduring quality.⁴⁶ Time did not allow the Committee to settle the membership of

⁴³ W.H.T. Gairdner, *"Edinburgh 1910": An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference*, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, p. 65.

⁴⁴ *History and Records*, p. iii.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 10-12.

⁴⁶ See Kerr and Ross, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*.

the Commissions so considerable discretion was allowed to Mott and Oldham to finalise the selection. This they used to good effect, as will be seen shortly in regard to Commission IV. The Commissions used a questionnaire approach to gather the perspectives of a wide range of missionary correspondents in different parts of the world. A major responsibility of Oldham's staff was to type up the responses to the questionnaires and despatch them to the members of the Commissions. While responsibility for the writing of the Commission Reports lay with their Chairmen, Oldham played a coordinating role, sometimes advocating "quite drastic restructuring".⁴⁷ In this way, Oldham set his stamp upon the Conference at a much deeper level than simply ensuring that it ran smoothly. He also exploited to the full the Scottish provenance of the Conference to strengthen the work of the Commissions.

Commission IV: The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions

Scots participated in the work of all of the Commissions but on some they had a particularly formative influence; none more so than Commission IV. This was the most strikingly original of all the Commission Reports and the one which attracts the greatest interest today, described by Kenneth Cracknell as "... one of the great turning points in the Christian theology of religion."⁴⁸ It is remarkable for the degree to which it scotches the idea that Western missionaries were iconoclasts bent on the eradication of existing religions in order to impose their own understanding of Christianity. On the contrary, the Report concludes by noting "the practically universal testimony that the true attitude of the Christian missionary to the non-Christian religions should be one of true understanding and, as far as possible, of sympathy."⁴⁹ Scottish correspondents,

⁴⁷ Keith Clements, "The Churches of Europe – 'Are We Still of Any Use?'" p. 89.

⁴⁸ Kenneth Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love*, p. xi.

⁴⁹ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission IV: The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions*, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, p. 267.

notably Donald Fraser,⁵⁰ George Douglas, John Nicol Farquhar,⁵¹ A.G. Hogg⁵² and Nicol Macnicol,⁵³ played their full part in contributing to that testimony.

Decisive, however, for the innovative and ground-breaking work of the Commission was the choice of the Chairman. Mott and Oldham opted not for a recognised missionary leader but for the Professor of Systematic Theology at the United Free Church College in Aberdeen, David Cairns. As Cracknell observes: "The choice of a theologian suggests already that Mott and Oldham were looking for something more than a competent survey of the world's religions."⁵⁴ If so, their choice was to be vindicated. Not only had they chosen a theologian but one who had wrestled with his own doubts and, in finding answers through re-thinking traditional theology, had been an important influence on the great Scottish missionary thinker in India, Alfred George Hogg.⁵⁵

The key to the outcome of the Commission lay in the questions that Cairns prepared for the questionnaire. Question 5 read: "What attitude should the Christian preacher take toward the religion of the people

⁵⁰ See T. Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.

⁵¹ See Eric J. Sharpe, *J.N. Farquhar: A Memoir*, Calcutta: YMCA, 1963; Eric J. Sharpe, *"Not to Destroy but to Fulfil": The Contribution of J.N. Farquhar to Protestant Missionary Thought in India before 1914*, Studia Missionalia Upsalienensia & Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1965.

⁵² See Eric J. Sharpe, *The Theology of A.G. Hogg*, Bangalore: CISRS and Madras: CLS, 1971; James L. Cox, "The Development of A.G. Hogg's Theology in Relation to Non-Christian Faith: Its Significance for the Tambaram Meeting of the International Missionary Council 1938," Ph.D., University of Aberdeen, 1977.

⁵³ See D.B. Forrester, "Macnicol, Nicol," in Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 535.

⁵⁴ Kenneth Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love*, p. 187.

⁵⁵ Eric J. Sharpe, "A.G. Hogg 1875-1954: The Christian Message to the Hindu," in Gerald H. Anderson, Robert T. Coote, Norman A. Horner & James M. Phillips, *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, New York: Orbis, 1994, pp. 330-38 [331].

among whom he labours?"⁵⁶ This allowed missionaries the world over to indicate the understanding, sympathy and respect which they believed should characterize the preacher's attitude, an outcome which Cracknell describes as "not less than stunning."⁵⁷ Question 6 read: "What are the elements in the said religion or religions which present points of contact with Christianity and may be regarded as a preparation for it?"⁵⁸ Again this was a leading question that allowed many missionary respondents to give expression to the fulfilment theology which turned out to be a strong feature of the Report.

Question 9 read: "To what extent do questions of 'higher criticism' and other developments of modern Western thought exert an influence in your part of the mission field, and what effect do they have on your missionary work?"⁵⁹ This recognised the intellectual ferment that had such a great impact on people like Cairns and Hogg around the turn of the century and many respondents took the opportunity to reflect on their understanding of the presence and activity of God in the world's religious traditions. Question 10, addressed only to foreign missionaries, read: "Has your experience in missionary labour altered in either form or substance your impression as to what constitutes the most important and vital elements in the Christian Gospel?"⁶⁰ The distinction of form and substance in regard to the gospel was a portentous one, shocking to some of the correspondents but taken up eagerly by others as an opportunity to discuss how their understanding of the Christian gospel had changed through their encounter with people professing other religions.⁶¹ For example, George Douglas, the UF missionary in Manchuria, acknowledged that "the old missionary appeal founded upon compassion for the millions hurrying to eternity was too limited in its outlook ... the

⁵⁶ *Report of Commission IV: The Missionary Message*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love*, p. 202.

⁵⁸ *Report of Commission IV: The Missionary Message*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ *Report of Commission IV: The Missionary Message*, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Report of Commission IV: The Missionary Message*, p. 2.

⁶¹ See further Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love*, p. 197.

individualist motive [must] give place to Christ's concentration on the idea of the Kingdom of God."⁶²

A prominent contributor to the thinking of the Commission in the area of animistic religions was Donald Fraser of the Livingstonia Mission.⁶³ In response to Question 5 concerning the correct attitude to the religion among whom the missionary was working, Fraser wrote: "The Christian preacher should recognise that God has not left Himself without a witness among these people: that the God they ignorantly worship, we declare fully by the revelation of Christ that the immortality they believe in by their reverence of the spirits is a truth of God, but the condition of the spirits after death is revealed by the Bible: that their idea of the intercession of the spirits with God is the feeling after the one Intercessor, Jesus Christ through whom we have access to the Father. We should not declare the Gospel as antagonistic to their simple faith, but the clearer revelation of what they simply sought after."⁶⁴ Amongst the Livingstonia missionaries, Fraser was distinguished as one who was particularly sensitive to the religion and culture of the Ngoni people.⁶⁵ The direction his thought was taking was one that helped to make fulfilment theology the keynote of the Report.

The deeper roots of the Commission's thinking were found, however, not in Africa but in India. More than to any other single individual, the guiding theology of the Report is attributable to the work of John Nicol Farquhar, described by Andrew Walls as: "the most considerable Indologist produced by the missionary movement."⁶⁶ Anticipating his soon-to-be-

⁶² Commission IV – Responses to Questionnaire, manuscripts held by the Centre for the Study of World Christianity, University of Edinburgh, George Douglas, No. 43.

⁶³ See J. Stanley Friesen, *Missionary Responses to Tribal Religions at Edinburgh, 1910*, New York et al: Peter Lang, 1996, pp. 97-117.

⁶⁴ Commission IV – Responses to Questionnaire, Donald Fraser, No. 295.

⁶⁵ See Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi*.

⁶⁶ A.F. Walls, "Farquhar, John Nicol," in Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 315.

published and highly influential work, *The Crown of Hinduism*,⁶⁷ Farquhar's extensive response to the questionnaire developed the idea of fulfilment that saw Hinduism as India's Old Testament which prepared the way for the coming of Christ and found its fulfilment in him. This allowed him both to engage Hinduism with deep understanding and profound sympathy and to regard it as being fulfilled and therefore superseded by the coming of Christ.⁶⁸ As he would conclude his *magnum opus*: "In [Jesus Christ] is focused every ray of light that shines in Hinduism. He is the Crown of the faith in India."⁶⁹ As Eric Sharpe observes, though Farquhar was not present at Edinburgh 1910, "his influence is clearly seen in the Report of Commission IV."⁷⁰ The Report itself acknowledges that among those who saw Hindu theism and philosophy as "alike fulfilled and superseded by Christianity ... Mr Farquhar of Calcutta may be taken as a typical representative."⁷¹

The idea of fulfilment as a key to the interpretation of religion had its roots in the work of Max Müller⁷² but it had no more articulate exponent in the missionary world than J.N. Farquhar and it was his approach which became the guiding light for David Cairns and his fellow Commissioners. It should be noted, however, that the fulfilment approach was not uncontested and Farquhar's "most rigorous critic"⁷³ was another Scottish missionary in India, Alfred George Hogg, who at this time was at an early stage in his distinguished teaching career at Madras Christian College. For

⁶⁷ J.N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, London: Oxford University Press, 1913.

⁶⁸ See Eric J. Sharpe, "J.N. Farquhar 1861-1929," in Anderson et al., *Mission Legacies*, pp. 290-96.

⁶⁹ Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 458.

⁷⁰ Sharpe, "J.N. Farquhar," p. 290.

⁷¹ *Report of Commission IV: The Missionary Message*, p. 181.

⁷² See Max F. Muller, *Essays on the Science of Religion*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1871; Max F. Muller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, London: Longmans, 1882 [1873]; also, discussion in Friesen, *Missionary Responses*, pp. 65-74.

⁷³ T.E. Yates, "Edinburgh Revisited: Edinburgh 1910 to Melbourne 1980," *The Churchman*, Vol. 94 No. 2 (1980), p. 152 [145-155].

Hogg the idea of fulfilment was an abstraction and a condescension. While eager to take a sympathetic approach and find points of affinity whenever possible, the essential point for Hogg was the contrast between Christianity and Hinduism on such crucial points as divine agency and the concept of merit.⁷⁴ For our purposes at this point it is sufficient to note that in the debate at the heart of this ground-breaking Commission there were no voices more influential than those of the three Scots: Farquhar, Hogg and Cairns.

Commission III: Education and the Christianisation of National Life

Education was at the core of missionary work almost everywhere but it was something to which Scottish missionaries had given particular attention. As Andrew Walls remarks: "For many other missions, education was simply one branch of missionary activity, made necessary by the mission's other activities, or required as the price of its presence in the local setting. For the Scottish missions, at least for a substantial and determinative part of their existence, education was mission."⁷⁵ This was reflected in the work of Commission III on Education and the Christianisation of National Life. No surprise, then, that this Commission was chaired by John Campbell Gibson, a missionary of the English Presbyterian Church who had been born and educated in Scotland. Many Scots were also to be found among the influential correspondents: Dugald Mackichan,⁷⁶ William Miller,⁷⁷ Alexander Hetherwick⁷⁸ and Robert Laws.⁷⁹ Hether-

⁷⁴ See further Eric Sharpe, *The Theology of Hogg*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1971, pp. 47-59.

⁷⁵ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, New York: Orbis and Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2002, p. 262.

⁷⁶ See Dugald Mackichan, *The Missionary Ideal in the Scottish Churches*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927.

⁷⁷ See O. Chetty Kandaswamy, *Dr. William Miller*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1924.

⁷⁸ See Alexander Hetherwick, *The Romance of Blantyre: How Livingstone's Dream Came True*, London: James Clarke, no date [1931].

⁷⁹ See Robert Laws, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*, Edinburgh & London: Oliver & Boyd, 1934; also Hamish Macintosh, *Robert Laws: Servant of Africa*, Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1993.

wick's submission was typical of the Scottish perspective: "First and foremost among the most effective agencies in the spread of the Gospel I would put education. The School in Africa is the mother of the Church, and the Teacher is the first and the best Evangelist. We have always found the church to follow the school, and each village school becomes from the outset the centre of a Christian propagandum."⁸⁰

Where Scottish influence was particularly felt, however, was in the circulation of a pamphlet by William Miller at the conference itself.⁸¹ Having served as Principal of Madras Christian College from 1877 to 1907, Miller was, in the judgement of Duncan Forrester, "... the most influential educational missionary of his day in India."⁸² Though Miller's concerns were not absent from the Commission's Report he believed that they were insufficiently emphasised. His pamphlet was devoted to expounding the philosophy of mission that had distinguished Scottish educational missionaries in India since the time of Alexander Duff. "It is a mistake," he argued, "to suppose that the making of individual converts was at any time the only, or even the main, aim of these schools and colleges."⁸³ Rather, "a long and gradual process of leavening or permeating the general community is absolutely necessary before the national life of India, that is, the life of the real people of the country, is Christianised."⁸⁴

Taking a longer view and aiming to influence the entire community, rather than looking to the short term and focussing on individuals, were essential characteristics of the Scottish missionary approach. Miller stood

⁸⁰ Commission I – Responses to Questionnaire, Alexander Hetherwick, No. 408. Quoted by courtesy of The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, Columbia University Libraries.

⁸¹ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life*, Report of Commission III, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, pp. 441-46.

⁸² D.B. Forrester, "Miller, William," in Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, pp. 564-65.

⁸³ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life*, p. 443.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 444.

at the heart of this tradition when he argued that the Indian context meant that missionaries were called upon "to take specially broad views and to work not only for immediate but also for distant ends."⁸⁵ While his views were accorded great respect by the conference, at the end of the day it was not convinced, being more inclined to place emphasis on the training of leaders for the emerging Indian church.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, his capacity to lobby the conference delegates with a distinctively Scottish perspective on missionary education in India, shows the extent to which the Scottish provenance of the conference influenced the course of its debates.

Commission V: The Preparation of Missionaries

The conference met at a time when the contribution of women to the missionary movement was becoming ever more substantial.⁸⁷ It was significant, therefore, that the secretary of Commission V, which examined the preparation of missionaries, was Miss Annie Small, Principal of the Women's Missionary College in Edinburgh.⁸⁸ The extent of her influence on the Commission is acknowledged in its Report: "This institution, which appears to be the only one exemplifying many of the methods which have commended themselves to the Commission, is necessarily used as an illustration here and elsewhere."⁸⁹ Not only was frequent reference made in the Report to the Edinburgh College but it included an appendix by Annie Small entitled: "The Women's Missionary College, Edinburgh"⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 441-42.

⁸⁶ See W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, p. 122.

⁸⁷ See Lesley Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830-1930*, Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000, pp. 104-166.

⁸⁸ See Isabel Lusk, "A Thoroughly Furnished Woman": *Annie Small and the Training of Women Missionaries*, Edinburgh: St Colm's, 1994, pp. 18-19.

⁸⁹ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *The Preparation of Missionaries*, (also titled *The Training of Teachers*), Report of Commission V, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, p. 87.

⁹⁰ World Missionary Conference, *The Preparation of Missionaries*, Appendix VII, pp. 250-52. Appendix XIII, it may be noted, comprised the answers to the Com-

The College was distinguished by the extent to which it encouraged the students to think for themselves. No examinations were held and, Annie Small claimed: "The result of this method has been to help students past the domination of textbooks, to enable them to form and to appraise ideas, and to accustom them to commend these to other minds."⁹¹ The ethos was one that fostered the freedom and independence of each student but encouraged them to have complete loyalty to one another.⁹² These principles made a deep impression on the Commission and help to shape the recommendations that were pedagogically influential within the missionary movement in the years which followed. Chairing the Commission was Douglas Mackenzie of Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut, USA, who had been brought up by Scottish missionary parents in South Africa.

Commission VII: Missions and Governments

Commission VII was devoted to a topic that was regarded as "novel" and "unusual" at a missionary conference – the relation of missions and governments.⁹³ It was chaired by Lord Balfour of Burleigh, the leading Scottish politician and churchman who also served as President of the conference.⁹⁴ Lord Balfour was a former cabinet minister;⁹⁵ and it was because the Commission was able to recruit members of such stature that it had credibility in addressing a topic of political importance and sensitivity.⁹⁶ While Balfour brought weight to the Commission, it is apparent that much more influence on its content was wielded by its Secretary, Andrew

mission's questions which has been provided by J.N. Farquhar who exercised great influence on Commission IV.

⁹¹ World Missionary Conference, *The Preparation of Missionaries*, p. 251.

⁹² World Missionary Conference, *The Preparation of Missionaries*, pp. 251-2.

⁹³ W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, pp. 154-55.

⁹⁴ See World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Missions and Governments*, Report of Commission VII, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910.

⁹⁵ D.W. Bebbington, "Balfour of Burleigh, Lord," in Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 53.

⁹⁶ See W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, p. 156.

Blair Wann of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Board who was responsible for drafting large sections of the Report.⁹⁷

Wann was very cautious when it came to engaging overtly political questions and it appears that J.H. Oldham's intervention was decisive in ensuring that the Report did include sharply critical comment on such matters as opium, the liquor trade and forced labour.⁹⁸ He in turn was influenced by contributions from the mission field, such as the remark by James Henderson of Lovedale that: "I cannot help feeling that the Christian Church has a duty to the world in regard to the downtrodden races of Africa. The fatal exploitation of the Natives of the Congo, the slavery prevailing in Loanda and the extermination of the Natives of German South-West Africa demand to be brought home to the conscience of the world in the name of Christ."⁹⁹ The concern for social justice that marked Scottish missionary endeavour left an impression on the work of Commission Seven. While the Report represents the outworking of the tension between British and American perspectives, the influence of Scottish traditions of witnessing to social justice is not to be underestimated.

Commissions I, II, VI and VIII

The flagship Commission I on "Carrying the Gospel to all the non-Christian World," chaired by John R. Mott himself, had the redoubtable George Robson, editor of the United Free Church of Scotland Missionary Record, as its Vice-Chairman. It heard from numerous Scottish correspondents including Nicol Macnicol who offered a characteristically Scottish missionary perspective when he observed: "Of all the agencies that have been enumerated in the first part of this question there is one the

⁹⁷ See Brian Stanley, "Church, State, and the Hierarchy of 'Civilization': The Making of the 'Missions and Governments' Report at the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910," in Andrew Porter ed., *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914*, Cambridge and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, p. 60 [58-84].

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 76-79.

⁹⁹ Commission I – Responses to Questionnaire, James Henderson, No. 416. Quoted by courtesy of The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, Columbia University Libraries.

importance of which I desire especially to emphasise, all the more because it is apt to be overlooked and because I am disappointed to find no indication that the World Missionary Conference is drawing attention to its value and its neglect as I hoped would be done. I refer to the production and dissemination of literature in the vernaculars and in English."¹⁰⁰

Commission II – on "The Church on the Mission Field" – and Commission VI – on "The Home Base" – included such capable Scots as Rowland Ellis, Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, and Fairley Daly, Secretary of the Livingstonia Mission Committee. The influential Commission VIII, on Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity, was chaired by a Scot, the recently retired Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir Andrew Fraser, J.H. Oldham's father-in-law.¹⁰¹ To Fraser fell the task of formally moving the resolution to form a Continuation Committee,¹⁰² the only formal decision of the Edinburgh conference and the action that gave rise to the International Missionary Council and the wider ecumenical movement.¹⁰³ Taken together there can be little question that Scots played a role in the Commissions out of all proportion to their numbers in the worldwide missionary movement.

¹⁰⁰ Commission I – Responses to Questionnaire, Nicol Macnicol, No. 244. Quoted by courtesy of The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, Columbia University Libraries.

¹⁰¹ See Katherine Prior, "Fraser, Sir Andrew Henderson Leith" in H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison ed., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 20, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 822-23.

¹⁰² World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity*, Report of Commission VIII, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, pp. 202-04; cf W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, pp. 208-09.

¹⁰³ See Ruth Rouse and Stephen C. Neill, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, Vol. I, London: SPCK, 1967; Ans J. van der Bent, "Ecumenical Conferences," in Nicholas Lossky et al eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva and Grand Rapids: WCC and Eerdmans, 1991, pp. 325-336.

Conclusion: How the World Missionary Conference was Shaped by its Scottish Provenance

To argue that the conduct and character of the Conference were greatly influenced by its venue is not necessarily to claim that this was altogether a good thing. Meeting in what Gairdner described as "the royal capital of a Christian king"¹⁰⁴ underlined the close complicity between mission and colonialism that would later expose the missionary movement to heavy criticism. Perhaps a different venue would have allowed for more critical distance. Or perhaps it would have made no difference since, in the judgement of Andrew Walls in regard to British missionaries: "almost without dissent they believed in the essential beneficence of empire."¹⁰⁵ The Assembly Hall setting and the involvement of the British Establishment underlined the close alliance of mission and empire. In this regard Edinburgh might later be regarded as a questionable choice of venue, not something that troubled the participants at the time. Nor one that will occupy us further here. For our analysis is concentrated on the degree to which its Scottish provenance influenced the conduct and outcomes of the Conference. This can be considered at two levels.

By all accounts, the delegates were deeply impressed by the organisation of the Conference and cheerfully accepted the Presbyterian flavour that permeated its proceedings. This can be illustrated by an apparently trivial point that arose at the most decisive moment of the Conference. Sir Andrew Fraser had moved the resolution to establish a Continuation Committee, the only formal decision that the Conference was to take. The delegates were fully ready to give their unanimous vote, "charged with the emotional intensity of expectation that has reached its climax."¹⁰⁶ Who but a Scottish Presbyterian would feel compelled at such a moment to make a procedural point? Wallace Williamson rose to ask: "... am I right in understanding that there is no provision under Section (4) for the

¹⁰⁴ Rouse and Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew F. Walls, "British Missions," in Torben Christensen & William R. Hutchison eds., *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*, Århus, Denmark: Aros, 1982, p. 164; cit. Friesen, *Missionary Responses to Tribal Religions*, p. 98.

¹⁰⁶ W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, p. 209.

continuance of the Continuation Committee? If so, I would therefore suggest the advantage of the words following upon Committee, 'which shall have power to fill up vacancies as they occur'.¹⁰⁷ Who but a Scottish Presbyterian, as Convener of the Business Committee, would have thought of this already? George Robson replied: "Might I say that that point was present to the minds of some of us, but it is in accordance with our Scottish custom at any rate that this provision for filling up vacancies is inserted in connection with the submission of the proposed members of the Committee."¹⁰⁸

This is the kind of exchange in which the two men would have participated on many occasions in the courts of their respective Churches. It illustrates how the provenance of Scottish Presbyterianism influenced the conduct of the Conference. The very architecture of the Assembly Hall, specifically designed to accommodate the conciliar method of decision-making of a Presbyterian Church, left its mark upon the Conference.¹⁰⁹ Rather than being an exhibition on a platform as with earlier international missionary conferences, it was an occasion on which delegates listened to one another and sought to come to a collective mind. The character and conduct of the Conference cannot be adequately explained without reference to fact that the venue was constructed on Presbyterian principles and to the unmistakable evidence that guiding spirits of the Conference had been schooled in Scottish Presbyterian methods of debate and decision-making.¹¹⁰

The Scottish influence, however, went well beyond procedural matters. In 1911, the year following the Conference, David Cairns addressed a

¹⁰⁷ *Report of Commission VIII: Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity*, p. 208.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ A newspaper correspondent remarked: "One for a moment felt under the delusion that Lord Balfour was His Grace the Lord High Commissioner." *Scotsman*, 15 June 1910.

¹¹⁰ When this chapter was first presented as a paper at the conference on "Roots and Fruits: Scottish Missionary Traditions" held in Edinburgh on 4 October 2008, the Conference Chair David Miller suggested that perhaps the Presbyterian flavour of the Conference was most clearly revealed in the fact that the only decision it took was to establish a committee!

student conference on the question of which elements of Scottish religious history were of special significance for the missionary movement. One of them, he suggested was "strong theology, the tradition of strong thinking in religion".¹¹¹ Having served as Study Secretary of the United Free Church Foreign Mission Committee, Oldham was immersed in this tradition and it governed his approach to the Commissions and the Conference. He sought to connect the missionary movement with the intellectual and theological mainstream in a way that was unusual and innovative. Early in the preparations for the conference, for example, Oldham recruited James Denney, Professor of New Testament at the United Free Church College in Glasgow. Denney was not only one of the nation's most influential theologians but was also "becoming recognised as *the* ecclesiastical leader in Scotland".¹¹²

The second issue of the Monthly News Sheet featured an article by Denney entitled "Counting the Cost" in which he commented: "It can only help the cause to which it is devoted if we realise afresh in connection with it the incomparable good which we have in Christ and the gospel ... To realise the incomparable good which we have in Him we must realise what it cost to God to put it within our reach. We were bought with a price. It is only as a religion of redemption, and redemption through an infinite sacrifice, that Christianity has been and will remain a missionary religion. It is the sense of what we owe to God in Christ which contains in it the motives inspiring missionary work. It is the man who has the deepest sense of debt to Christ who feels most deeply that he is debtor to all men for Christ's sake."¹¹³

When it came to the conference itself prominent Scottish theologians were among the speakers who gave the influential evening addresses: W.P. Paterson, H.A.A. Kennedy, A.R. MacEwen and, of course, James

¹¹¹ Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, p. 261.

¹¹² Kenneth R. Ross, "Denney, James," in Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 240.

¹¹³ World Missionary Conference 1910, *Monthly News Sheet*, November 1909, pp. 27-28.

Denney.¹¹⁴ Their speeches demonstrated how much their thinking was informed by the missionary movement and how concerned they were to bring their theological learning into engagement with it. In an atmosphere that has often been characterised as triumphalist, Denney struck a sobering note: "Men [sic] are not coming forward as ministers, nor coming forward as missionaries, because they are not coming forward into the membership of the Christian Church at all. One is tempted to say that there is no use calling for reinforcements at the front while recruiting is stopped at home, and that is to a large extent the grave situation with which we are confronted. Something must happen to the Church at home if it is going even to look at the work which has been put upon it by this Conference."¹¹⁵ "His address," remarked Temple Gairdner, "was one of power. It impressed because it hurt."¹¹⁶ The presence of a theologian of Denney's stature brought to the conference a perspective which could look wider than the immediate demands of the foreign missionary movement to the challenges that lay ahead for the church in the so-called "Christian world".

The character and influence of the Scottish intellectual tradition has recently been the subject of renewed consideration.¹¹⁷ So far as the modern Western missionary movement is concerned, Edinburgh 1910 brought it into engagement with greater depth of theological analysis and more sophisticated intellectual discourse than anything that had gone before. In its 19th century history it had been, in the main, an activist movement, if not anti-intellectual then simply so occupied with the immediate demands of its activity that it had no scope for extensive reflection. Perhaps Oldham's most distinctive contribution was his determination to recruit Scotland's most capable and creative theologians to

¹¹⁴ World Missionary Conference 1910, *History and Records*, pp. 156-63, 173-85, 195-205, 322-29.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 323.

¹¹⁶ W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, p. 261.

¹¹⁷ See Arthur Herman, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It*, New York: Crown Publishers, 2001; James Buchan, *Capital of the Mind: How Edinburgh Changed the World*, London: John Murray, 2003.

bring their scholarly acumen to the work of the Conference. The Reports of the eight Commissions marked a new maturity in the missionary movement and set the bar by which subsequent ecumenical conferences would be measured. As we have seen, the role of Scots in the creation of the Commission Reports was entirely disproportionate to their numbers either as a nation or as participants in the missionary movement. The Scottish provenance of the 1910 World Missionary Conference therefore lent it a depth of intellectual grounding and a sophistication of theological analysis that marked it out as a distinctive and ground-breaking event.

12. James Dougall 1896-1980: Architect of Post-War Scottish Foreign Mission Policy

The years after the Second World War proved to be a watershed for the international missionary work of the Church of Scotland. Politically, the Church's three main mission fields changed out of all recognition. India and Pakistan attained independence in 1947, the Communist revolution took place in China in 1949 and the wind of change which would bring independence swept through Africa in the 1950s. Parallel to these political developments was the emergence of a vigorous indigenous church in all of these fields, bringing the challenge of handing over responsibility for Christian witness from the "mission" to the "church". Serving as General Secretary of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee from 1946 to 1960, James Dougall had the responsibility to guide the Church through these stormy waters.

Born on 8 April 1896, educated at George Watson's College, Glasgow Academy and Perth Academy and completing his M.A. at Glasgow University in 1919, James Dougall had been ordained in 1923 and immediately undertook a major responsibility in Africa as Secretary of the Phelps-Stokes Commission in 1923-24. This Commission, the initiative of New York based philanthropists, examined the situation throughout Africa in order to determine how best education might be developed. Its Reports led to the colonial Governments taking much greater responsibility for education in the African community. For Dougall it was a unique opportunity to develop an extensive familiarity with the African situation. He therefore already had wide experience when he began his work in Kenya where from 1925 to 1931 he served as Principal of Jeanes School in Kabete, and from 1932 to 1936 as Educational Adviser to the Non-Roman Missions in Kenya and Uganda. His eleven years there left him with a deep sense of identification with Africa and its people. He returned to the UK in 1936 to become a Secretary of the Conference of British Missionary Societies, a position which enabled him to develop the wide range of contacts and connections which he would exploit to the full during the next twenty years of service in the secretariat of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, as Associate Secretary from 1940 to 1946 and General Secretary from 1946 to 1960. On his re-

tirement, the Committee recognised that "with his unique knowledge and experience of the World Church, his outstanding gifts and his unusual insight into the nature of missionary trends, he has been the guide, inspirer and formulator of the policy of the Committee in recent years."¹ Finally, he was elected to serve as Convener of the new Overseas Council, which brought together all the Church of Scotland committees concerned with overseas work, from 1964 to 1969.

Dougall was alert to the reality that the world was rapidly changing and that the missionary enterprise would have to change to meet the new situation. As he wrote to Ralph Morton early in 1950: "Some of us feel very strongly that the time has come for a new approach to our missionary obligations and that without any presumption on our part that we know better than our fathers, but simply that the situation has changed in all the fields as well as in the Church at home."² In preparing the Report of a Special Committee on Policy established at that time, Dougall therefore made the point that its "enquiry starts from the assumption that the world in which the Church lives has so changed that the particular form of the mission of the Church to the world has to be re-examined and restated.... It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the missionary task for this generation involves new perspectives, means and methods if we are to be faithful to the Truth which marches on."³ It was a time of ferment and a time of reform. Dougall sought to bring his understanding of the missionary task and apply it to the rapidly changing context. In this exercise a number of themes featured prominently and these proved to be formative in giving shape to the overseas mission engagement of the Church of Scotland in the second half of the 20th century.

The Primacy of Evangelism

A theme to which Dougall returned again and again is the primacy of evangelism in the mission of the church. It might seem to be stating the obvious to say that the missionary enterprise is about sharing the Chris-

¹ *Reports to the 1960 General Assembly*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 1960, pp. 474-75.

² J.W.C. Dougall to Rev T. Ralph Morton, 7 March 1950.

³ *Reports to the 1952 General Assembly*, p. 352.

tian faith with those who do not adhere to it. Yet Dougall was deeply aware of the possibility of being distracted from this primary purpose. When the Foreign Mission Committee was wrestling with the great changes in the international scene that unfolded after the Second World War, its 1950 Statement of Policy, drafted by Dougall, might easily have begun with the new context in which it found itself. Instead, it takes as its starting point the good news of Jesus Christ and the outreach that it demands:

The expansive power of the Gospel is the very nerve of the missionary enterprise and the Church lives by it and lives for it. So also the deepest need of the Church and Mission is not better organisation or training or self-support, but a firmer apprehension of the Gospel as a glorious fact, not aspiration, as indeed the fulfilment of God's gracious promises in Jesus Christ through the Spirit's presence with His Church. The Policy Group therefore would put as the primary emphasis the possession of great and good news which it is our privilege and duty to share, believing, as we do, that it is God's will that the Gospel should be proclaimed to all men until the Kingdom of God comes in all its fullness.⁴

This reflects the characteristic approach of James Dougall. While, as we shall see, he took a very broad view of the nature of Christian mission, he cherished above all its evangelistic core. Anything that distracted from the essential task of sharing the good news about Jesus Christ was the object of suspicion. A primary guiding principle for Dougall was his conviction that: "... the traditional and central urge of missionary enthusiasm has always looked beyond the Christian community to those who were without, to the people who sat in darkness because the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ had not illumined their hearts and lives."⁵ As he surveyed the situation around him in the immediate post-war period he noted "... the urgent need for a recovery of the evangelical impulse. By this I mean a concern in the Church at home to witness to what God has done for men through His mighty acts in Jesus Christ, and through that

⁴ Ibid, p. 349.

⁵ J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1963, p. 92.

witness to bring individuals to accept Christ as Lord and Saviour. So stated, evangelism is the life-blood of the missionary movement."⁶

In Dougall's mind, a particular danger to which the missionary enterprise was exposed was that of having its energies absorbed in administration. It was a question of the good being the enemy of the best. No one would dispute that a great deal of good was done by the assiduous labours of thousands of missionaries who administered the great educational, industrial and medical institutions that the missionary movement had created. To take, for example, the Foreign Mission Committee's work in Africa and Jamaica, Dougall noted that "... the schools with which we are associated number over two thousand, with a staff of between four and five thousand teachers and an attendance of some 180,000 pupils.... The complicated financial arrangements of fees and government grants, the appointment and dismissal of teachers and the administration of the system are still in the hands of missionaries."⁷ The difficulty that registered itself with Dougall through many reports from the field was that missionaries were so exhausted by the demands of administrative work that they were scarcely able to attend at all to the primary task of evangelism.

A prime example was the Report of the Commission which examined the Church of Scotland's work in central and southern Africa in 1946-47: "Nothing impressed the Commission more than the danger of losing the distinctly evangelistic note in missionary effort. The passing of the first generation of converts, the legitimate concern for Church stability and organisation, the multiplicity of administrative problems worrying the missionary, the encroachments of Government regulations due to grants-in-aid, above all, the shortage of African helpers, evangelists, pastors and others – all these easily combine to blur the missionary vision and distract attention from the priority and distinctiveness of the Gospel and its embodiment in a fellowship."⁸ Such reports impressed on Dougall the conviction that a time of retrenchment might provide an opportunity to

⁶ J.W.C. Dougall, "Education and Evangelism," *International Review of Missions*, Vol. 36 (1947), p. 313.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁸ *Reports to the 1948 General Assembly*, p. 361.

re-focus on the primary aim of the missionary effort. As he wrote to Lesslie Newbigin at the end of 1949: "You will have seen from my recent circular letter that we are facing the possibilities of severe retrenchment but that we don't regard it as an unmixed evil. I feel sure that if only we could use it properly we might do something to recover the simplicity and directness of the missionary aim which has been so obscured by our missionaries undertaking too much and being immersed in administration."⁹

In the Reports that he drafted for the General Assembly in the post-war years, the aspiration to break new ground often came to the surface. The Africa section of the Report to the 1948 General Assembly included the question: "... what of the new areas to be reached and the old areas to be more effectively occupied? One missionary has recently reported that 'those members of staff who have visited the north know of a vast area larger than Scotland almost untouched by missionary enterprise.' The era of pioneering the Gospel is far from over."¹⁰ Reflecting on the situation in Nigeria it goes on: "Away to the north lie the more open grasslands and the Obudu Hills. There lies the direction for our Mission advance, reserved by inter-Mission agreement; but no advance is possible until, with the solution of the problem of administration of the existing stations, men are released for pioneering once more."¹¹ The north of Ghana captured Dougall's missionary imagination in a similar way and it was prominent in reports he drafted for reasons astutely discerned by Elizabeth Hewat in the concluding words of her chapter on Ghana: "In 1957 the Scots began work at the new station of Sandema – the effort being specially noteworthy in showing that the days of pioneer work are not over, and in demonstrating the cooperative endeavour of African and Westerner to discharge their missionary responsibility among a people who as yet know not Christ."¹² When the 1950 Statement of Policy was discuss-

⁹ J.W.C. Dougall to the Rt Rev Bishop J.E.L. Newbigin, Madura, South India, 30 December 1949.

¹⁰ *Reports to the 1948 General Assembly*, p. 359.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 365.

¹² Elizabeth G.K. Hewat, *Vision and Achievement 1796-1956, A History of the Foreign Missions of the Churches United in the Church of Scotland*, London:

ing the handing over of institutions to the indigenous church, it raised this possibility: "Where possible, the transfer of responsibility from Mission to Church should be used to release missionary effort and money from long-established work in order to do more for the opening up of new fields of experiment."¹³ The eye for the frontier, for the new departure, for the opportunity to take the gospel of Christ where it had not been heard before – this was at the heart of the strategic thinking developed by James Dougall. Even as he was about to retire, in his final circular letter to the missionaries in India and Pakistan he made the point that: "the more we try to do in and through institutions and inter-church aid ... the more necessary it is to concentrate on the unfinished evangelistic task of the Churches."¹⁴

Social Vision

By mid-century, there was already a clear division appearing within Protestant Christianity between those whose understanding of mission centred around evangelism and personal conversion and those who stressed the transformation of the whole community. Whereas at the start of the century, many would have understood themselves as both "evangelical" and "ecumenical," these steadily became the watchwords of two separate camps. In this increasingly polarised context, Dougall's zeal for the priority of personal, one-to-one evangelism could not be questioned. Yet combined with it was a broad vision of the renewal of society under the influence of the gospel. In one of his earliest writings he had already made this clear: "For the Christian missionary, as for his Lord, there can be no conflict between individual conversion and social regeneration, between God's grace in the human heart and Christian discipleship, between continuous evangelism on the one hand and education with a dominating Christian motive on the other."¹⁵ It was charac-

Thomas Nelson, 1960, p. 250. See further Abraham Berinyuu, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Northern Ghana*, Accra: Asempa Press, 1997.

¹³ *Reports to the 1952 General Assembly*, p. 351.

¹⁴ J.W.C. Dougall, farewell circular letter to missionaries in India and Pakistan, 14 March 1960.

¹⁵ J.W.C. Dougall, *Religious Education in Africa*, London and New York: International Missionary Council, n.d. [1929], p. 10.

teristic of Dougall's perspective when the Foreign Mission Committee Report to the 1957 General Assembly stated that: "Mission in the Biblical sense is the task of the whole Church to the whole life of the world.... Many have conceived it as reaching with the Christian message every human being on the surface of the globe. That is part of it. But human life has depth as well as extension."¹⁶

This perspective was one that he sustained through all his years in office. He shared with Max Warren, his counterpart at the Anglican Church Missionary Society, a suspicion of any tendency to separate sacred history – *Heilsgeschichte* – from the outworking of history as a whole.¹⁷ The conviction that the whole of history belongs to God and is the stage on which the drama of God's purpose is unfolded is one that would unite these two notable post-war General Secretaries. As Dougall stated in his Duff Lectures of 1962: "One reason ... for our interest in politics, though it must not be regarded as standing by itself, is that we cannot obtain a hearing for the Gospel if it has nothing to say about the struggles and fears, ambitions and evils of which men are most conscious in Africa to-day – and this applies to the white African as well as the black or brown African. And are they to blame if they turn away from a Gospel which has nothing to say to them in their present historical situation? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of all history, ancient and modern."¹⁸

The Duff Lectures, given shortly after his retirement, gave Dougall the opportunity to reflect in some depth on the need for a broad social vision to guide Christian mission in Africa. This led him to some words of Joe Oldham, mentor to many missionary leaders in the first half of the 20th century:

If the Church were to cease to interest itself in the economic, social and intellectual advancement of the peoples of Africa and occupy itself

¹⁶ *Reports to the 1957 General Assembly*, p. 426.

¹⁷ See Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 139-40.

¹⁸ J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1963, p. 37. Later in the book Dougall quotes Warren's passionate plea "to see that the Church is concerned with the whole of life," *Ibid*, p. 80.

mainly with caring for the 'souls' of Africans through its evangelistic and pastoral work, a separation would be made between the religious growth of the African and his growth as a human being. The development of his natural powers and the improvement of his earthly existence would come to be regarded as something secular and would be set in competition with his spiritual allegiance. The sense of the unity of life, which is so strong in the African, would be sacrificed and the full meaning of the Gospel as having to do with the redemption of man's whole life would be obscured. If, on the other hand, the energies of the Church should become absorbed in humanitarian and cultural tasks, in a multiplicity of activities directed to intellectual and social improvement, the Church would have betrayed its trust. These activities are saved from corruption and emptiness only when there shines on them a light from the eternal world.¹⁹

This, to Dougall, was a challenge to which practitioners of Christian mission must apply themselves:

We must not underestimate the immense difficulty of maintaining this bifocal conception of the Church's task and mission in Africa. We know how seldom any Church or congregation can live consistently in accordance with this standard even in a country with a long tradition of Christian culture such as our own. How much more difficult for a Church in Africa to walk this narrow way between self-centredness, introversion, clericalism on the one hand and humanitarianism, activism and secularism on the other. The scope of the Church's task is so much broader in Africa than here in Britain where the State and the community have undertaken most of the social and welfare services required by the modern community. Just because the Church in Africa is so close to the people, just because religion is integrated with the common life to a degree now seldom understood by us, the task in Africa is harder though the reward is nearer at hand."²⁰

In his theology of mission, Dougall continuously protested against what he described, borrowing R.H. Tawney's words, as "a dualism which has

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 90; cit. J.H. Oldham & B.D. Gibson, *The Remaking of Man in Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1931, pp. 138-39.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 90-91.

emptied religion of its social content and society of its soul".²¹ In one of his final speeches to the General Assembly he quoted Dag Hammarskjöld's words that, "In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action" and added: "We might well say that the road to mission passes this way also."²²

Education

This determination to avoid dualism and achieve a "bifocal" approach in the missionary enterprise found particular expression in regard to education. From its earliest years, Scottish involvement in overseas mission had been marked by an emphasis on education. As Andrew Walls remarks: "For many other missions, education was simply one branch of missionary activity, made necessary by the mission's other activities, or required as the price of its presence in the local setting. For the Scottish missions, at least for a substantial and determinative part of their existence, education *was* mission."²³ Dougall is a prime exemplar. His first assignment after ordination was to serve as secretary of the Phelps-Stokes Commission enquiring into the development of education in Africa. In the Duff lectures given after his retirement it was clear that his passion for education as a central plank in the missionary enterprise was as strong as ever.

Arthur Wilkie, the influential Scottish educational missionary who served at Calabar, the Gold Coast and Lovedale in South Africa, was acknowledged by Dougall as an inspiration and mentor in this area. In the Duff lectures he recalled the strong claims which Wilkie had made for the educational dimension of Christian mission: "Education is not outside the primary plan of Christian missions, but lies at the very heart of it. It is the finest God-given instrument for the evangelisation and upbuilding of a new Africa."²⁴ Dougall affirmed this emphasis and stressed particularly

²¹ R.H. Tawney, cit. J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1963, p. 27.

²² Church of Scotland General Assembly 1968, Verbatim Record, p. 477.

²³ Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, p. 262.

²⁴ J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1963, p. 20.

the function of education as countering dualism: "Education is, as it were, the bridge between God and the world. It shows the Church's concern for man as a whole in society. It affirms by practical deeds the fundamental relatedness of the Gospel to every aspect of the community's life. With all its defects the Church's educational effort is still an effective protest against the divorce of knowledge and revelation, works and faith, sense and spirit, individual salvation and social righteousness."²⁵

Dougall was alert to the fact that the compartmentalization of knowledge that characterised the European Enlightenment was at odds with traditional African modes of thought and that education which did not include religious reference points as an integral element would have very limited effect. In his early book on religious education in Africa he quotes from Wilkie's address at the Jerusalem conference of the International Missionary Council in 1928: "To give the African, with his characteristic outlook on reality, a training divorced from religion would be a crime."²⁶ This was a theme which struck a deep chord with Dougall and he remained convinced that the African outlook called for a holistic approach to education with religion at its core.

At a time when education would increasingly be seen as a function of the state with churches becoming more focussed on directly religious and ecclesiastical concerns, Dougall held out for the distinctive role of the Christian school. In his view there was too much at stake for the educational effort of Christian mission to be relinquished, notwithstanding his emphasis on the primacy of evangelism.²⁷ Thinking specifically of the case of Africa, he wrote:

Whether in the new self-governing territories there is going to be a sensitive public conscience may well be decided in the schools. The future of minorities, the possibility of freedom of worship, the right to voice unpopular opinions, the consciousness of belonging to a univer-

²⁵ J.W.C. Dougall, "Education and Evangelism," *International Review of Missions*, Vol. 36 (1947), p. 319.

²⁶ J.W.C. Dougall, *Religious Education in Africa*, p. 70.

²⁷ For a discussion of the tension between the evangelistic and the educational emphasis in the Scottish missionary tradition see Porter, *Religion versus Empire?* pp. 260-74.

sal and not to a nationalist Church – these are the sort of questions which a Christian education cannot avoid. Education provides the link between religion and life. The power to stimulate imagination and to inspire a passion for truth, the encouragement of friendships and the search for a just social order – these are among the aims of the Christian school and there is only one Master who can give them life and reality. That is why Christian education has an essential place in the Christian mission.²⁸

While education in Scotland was to become increasingly secularized, Presbyterian Churches in Africa took this vision to heart and, often against great odds, sustained and developed the educational programmes begun by the missionaries.

Indigenization and Contextualization

Dougall's African experience left him impressed with the need for the indigenization of the faith. Like many sensitive European missionaries, he was struck by the deep religious awareness of African communities and by the strength of African traditional religion. His early writings anticipate themes with which the first generation of academic African theology would be occupied when it emerged in the second half of the century:

Would it not be well for us to study the characteristic Native expressions of reverence and awe with a view to their use in our worship? How would the unsophisticated African show his consciousness of dependence, his reverence and respect, in approaching a Holy Teacher, a Wonderful Friend, a Merciful Lord? What forms of prayer did he naturally employ in religious ceremonies? How did he crave the blessings of his God or spirits? How did he visibly embody the sense of communion with the Supernatural? Could we not employ some of the usages of Native ceremonial, adapting them to Christian purposes? This has been done in some parts of Africa, but the method might be greatly extended. The Rain Ceremony in the case of the Lomwe tribe in Portuguese East Africa was converted into the Christian Harvest Thanksgiving. Just as in the former case men, women and children, even the babies, came forward or were carried to the Christian table or altar, each

²⁸ J J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1963, p. 35.

laying with his own hands the contributions of eggs or grain or fowls or fruit which as individuals and as a community they offered in gratitude to God.²⁹

In expressing this longing for a truly African Christianity, as well as for a Christian Africa, Dougall was representative of the best of the Scottish missionary tradition. He was prepared to articulate its theological implications. Far from a *tabula rasa* approach to the missionary task, Dougall argued that "We will find that their worship becomes most truly spiritual and moral when we do not deny or condemn but expand the meaning of what they already accept, reveal the best which is already implied and carry them further by means of the momentum of their Native aspirations and needs. Our worship will employ elements of the traditional practice of western denominations, but its character should be recognisably African."³⁰ In forming such an approach in the 1920s, Dougall anticipated the theological direction that African churches would take when they gained responsibility for their own affairs later in the century. Under his influence the Foreign Mission Committee would come to recognise as fundamental "the problem of how to pray for and work for a Church which the African people feel to be their own and not a foreign importation, and for an African ministry which understands, better than any missionary can understand, what goes on in the African mind and how its deepest longings and fears can be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."³¹ Years later, in one of his final speeches to the General Assembly, he offered his mature reflection on this topic, so determinative for missionary work: "We do not take Christ to Asia or Africa or Latin America, to the Jew or the Arab, to the Hindu, the Muslim, or the Buddhist. He is there already and the best service we can render is to help them recognise Him. He is God's representative in and to all mankind for He is before all things and in Him all things hold together."³²

Though the term "contextualization" had not yet been introduced to theological discussion, Dougall anticipated this approach. He was con-

²⁹ J.W.C. Dougall, *Religious Education in Africa*, pp. 24-25.

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 25-26.

³¹ Reports to the 1958 General Assembly, p. 490.

³² Church of Scotland General Assembly 1969, Verbatim Record, pp. 506-07.

stantly struggling to understand the developments unfolding around him and to discern their meaning in relation to the missionary purposes of God. His strong sense of all history being God's history meant that the contemporary context must always be taken with the utmost seriousness: "To proclaim Christ as Lord is to say that He is Lord of the revolutions in Africa and that He is at the centre of African history now."³³

As was frequently the case, it was Joe Oldham whose words Dougall found apposite in explaining why the gospel can only be understood in context:

It is forgotten that [religious] beliefs can *only* be expressed, not merely in a particular language but in a particular set of unspoken presuppositions which we call a conceptual framework. If the basic experience of men, their ways of apprehending and feeling about the world undergo a change, then the traditional expressions of conscious beliefs must also change if they are to be understood. In the world, as it is today, there can be no future for the proclamation of the Christian message unless it is accompanied by an intellectual effort of understanding and interpretation, consciously undertaken and far surpassing in scope and difficulty the great linguistic achievements of the foreign missionary period.³⁴

Such an understanding led Dougall to the radical realisation that the Christian message requires to be constantly re-thought and re-stated as it is introduced to a new situation. As he wrote to Ronald Orchard in 1958 "Absurd as it may seem at this hour of the day, I think we need to look again at the question, What is the Gospel? ... isn't it true that many questions of missionary policy vex us because we are not quite clear what the Gospel is?"³⁵ This is *the* question prompted by contextualization. It is when the specific challenges of a changing context are taken to heart that the question of "what the gospel is" becomes the burning one.

³³ J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1963, p. 87.

³⁴ J.H. Oldham article in *The Student Movement*, summer 1960; cit. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, p. 106.

³⁵ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev R.K. Orchard, International Missionary Council, 17 March 1958.

The Missionary Vocation

A major development that occupied much of Dougall's attention was the changing role of the missionary. Whereas his own missionary formation had taken place at a time when it was assumed that Western missionaries would direct the work of the missions for many years to come, from the late 1940s high on the agenda was the need to hand over authority to the indigenous church. It was time to rethink the missionary vocation. Dougall quoted the new definition offered by Lesslie Newbigin who described the missionary as "the agent of the help which one part of the Church sends to another for the discharge of the common missionary task."³⁶

While recognising that, in future, missionaries would go not to establish their own missions but rather to serve the indigenous church, Dougall was very anxious to sustain the traditional understanding of the missionary vocation. Against a trend which suggested that missionaries might serve for shorter periods of time, Dougall included this protest in the Report to the General Assembly of 1948: "In spite of the attraction which short service offers, it cannot be regarded as satisfactory for the Younger Churches to have people who do not stay long enough to speak the vernacular and who may not be fully committed to missionary service, though willing for a time to go abroad."³⁷ Counselling one young missionary, he stressed the importance of learning the local language: "Inability to speak the vernacular will be a severe handicap for you in getting to real grips with the people's most intimate needs and now's the time to determine that it shall be tackled."³⁸ Counselling another, he emphasised the value of long experience in missionary work: "All of us make a succession of mistakes in Africa during our first years of missionary service and no ability can take the place of the cumulative understanding of the African himself which grows with the years."³⁹

³⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World*, International Missionary Council, 1958, p. 47; cit. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, p. 93.

³⁷ *Reports to the 1948 General Assembly*, p. 371.

³⁸ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev G. Lawson Watt, 3 January 1946.

³⁹ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev Norman C. Macrae, Calabar, 5 February 1946.

Underlying this emphasis was a particular understanding of the missionary vocation. As Dougall wrote to William Arnott at Lovedale: "As I see it, the missionary vocation in the specific and technical sense involves a man or woman in responsibility both to the Church which sends him and to the Church which receives him, and his appointment is made under a contract which is quite different from that of the lay Christian in other work, however splendid and sacrificial that latter service may be, and there is no judgement of value implied in the reservation of the word 'missionary' for the former."⁴⁰ This commitment to the specificity of missionary service had been reflected in the Report of the Foreign Mission Committee to the 1952 General Assembly: "There must surely be a profound distinction between the relationships of Older and Younger Churches which are only linked by the casual and informal contacts of individual Christian laymen, however open their discipleship, and those Churches which are bound together by the presence of a missionary group on a solemn contract of service, offered, supported and guaranteed by the Older Church and accepted, integrated and commissioned by the Younger."⁴¹ While he rejoiced that strong indigenous churches were emerging in the various mission fields, Dougall fully expected that a corps of Scottish missionaries would continue to play a necessary role.

He was reluctant to acknowledge the new reality that, in the words of Andrew Walls: "The missionary no longer answers a lifetime call, and certainly does not get a visa for it."⁴² Missionary recruitment was already becoming a major issue in Dougall's time. As he prepared for a visit to West Africa in 1953 he confessed to John Beattie, the Acting Secretary at Calabar: "I wish I could come with more promises of help but Africa Committee yesterday really was most depressing, a succession of requests for more money which we could not provide and more people that we cannot recruit."⁴³ This proved to be typical of the post-War years, as David Lyon comments: "The sad failure of the Church to respond adequately with finance to the enormous opportunities that were

⁴⁰ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev William Arnott, Lovedale, 21 January 1957.

⁴¹ *Reports to the 1952 General Assembly*, p. 370.

⁴² Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p. 260.

⁴³ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev John Beattie, Acting Secretary, Calabar, 1 July 1953.

being opened for world mission, and to the great needs that were so apparent, was matched only by its failure to recruit men and women, suitable and in sufficient numbers, to serve as missionaries overseas."⁴⁴ Nonetheless Dougall persisted in hoping that the pattern of missionary service of earlier years could be sustained. Timothy Yates' assessment of Max Warren in this regard could equally be applied to Dougall: "The reader is left with the impression of a Canute, standing for a noble ideal of service but unable to stem this new tide, for whom the ideal was unrealistic in a possibly more brittle and certainly more mobile generation."⁴⁵

This was the emphasis that characterized his years as General Secretary. As Convener of the Overseas Council, however, in the late 1960s he struck a different note: "The Overseas Council still acts as agent for Christian Churches which ask us to recruit ministers, doctors, teachers and others for their service. But missionary work is not the monopoly of full time professionals, and it is vital that the Church here should understand this for two reasons: (1) that it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure entry permits for missionaries as such in some countries; and (2) because it is in the common life of society and not in some department labelled 'religion' that His witness is to be given and He is to reign as Lord."⁴⁶ This new direction in thinking of the missionary vocation was not something that Dougall was able to develop. He did, however, indicate that the time for a different pattern of missionary service might be arriving.

Church and Mission

The relation of church and mission was a vital area of discussion in these years. The Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952 caught the spirit of the time when it pronounced that: "We should cease to speak of *missions* and *churches* and avoid this dichotomy not only in our thinking but also in our actions. We should now speak

⁴⁴ David H.S. Lyon, *In Pursuit of a Vision*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1998, p. 113.

⁴⁵ Yates, *Christian Mission*, p. 143.

⁴⁶ Church of Scotland General Assembly 1969, Verbatim Record, p. 506.

about the mission of the Church."⁴⁷ This answered a question that had been ripening as the 20th century advanced: what is the relationship between the Western missions and the indigenous churches to which their witness gave rise? As Roland Allen had provocatively and prophetically stated the issue: "are we actually planting new churches or merely perpetuating a mission?"⁴⁸ Such questions were rather uncomfortable for the missionary establishment but Dougall was not unsympathetic. As he wrote to William Stewart, a leading Scottish missionary in India, early in 1950: "I also have been reading Roland Allen. It is a book which must make you think if you read it with any sympathy. A great deal of our work has probably missed the mark because it has not left the indigenous Church more responsible and more alive to the call of evangelism. It is not sufficient, as you say, to appeal for missionaries and funds in order to prepare the leaders when in the process we obscure the purpose for which they are being trained. Indeed, a great deal of what we do ourselves has confused the Church at home perhaps as to the real objects of missionary work. But I feel sure there is some flaw in Roland Allen's argument or in the way he works out its implications for it would seem as if there ought to be no organised missionary work nor any missionary societies."⁴⁹

The question had already been clearly stated at the Jerusalem Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1928.⁵⁰ For the Church of Scotland, however, it was dramatic changes twenty years later which brought the issue to the centre. Indian independence in 1947 prompted a wholesale rethink of its way of working in its premier mission field. Still more abrupt was to be the handover from mission to church in China as all missionaries departed in 1949-50. Surveying his time in office Dougall

⁴⁷ *The Missionary Obligation of the Church, Willingen, Germany*, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1952, p. 40; cit. Lyon, *In Pursuit of a Vision*, p. 75.

⁴⁸ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods St Paul's or Ours: A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces*, London: Robert Scott, 1912, p. v.

⁴⁹ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev William Stewart, Nagpur, 11 January 1950.

⁵⁰ See *The Relations between the Younger and Older Churches*, Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, London, Melbourne, Cape Town, Bombay and Shanghai: Oxford University Press, 1928, Vol. III.

observed that, "Amidst all the immense and bewildering varieties of circumstance and stage of development the two constant factors already achieved or plainly emerging are the autonomous Church in place of the mission, and the successor State instead of the colonial Government."⁵¹

This was something with which he had been faced at the outset of his time as General Secretary, particularly in regard to India. The great change coming to mission-church relations was recognised by the Foreign Mission Committee in its Report to the 1946 General Assembly:

Whatever the method of attaining self-government, it is assumed that Christian missions, being associated with the West, will be subject to restrictions from which a British Government in India has shielded them. That being so, the future of the missionary concern in India becomes essentially a question of the Indian Church and how it may acquit itself in the new and unknown future.... there can be no protection by any action we or other Churches in the West may take. What we can do is to welcome the Indian Church into the councils and discussions of the Church Universal, and meantime we can strengthen the things by which it may be most encouraged to give freely where it has freely received, to grow in the fellowship which has 'no frontiers except those it exists to remove,' and so to become the servant of God for the service and redemption of all the peoples of India regardless of caste or community or race.⁵²

At the same time came a recognition that this new pattern of relationship to church in India would be both essential and enriching: "We Christians of the Older Churches can no more stand alone in this post-Christian era without the fellowship of the Indian, Chinese, and African Churches than they, without us, can be perfected in their mission. We need each other as we need Him who is able to make both Home and Overseas one.... Is this not God's call to His people to close their ranks and to rejoice in their conversion from individualism and isolationism into the world-wide fellowship of giving and receiving, which is both the mirror and the means of His healing, forgiving, and transforming love for

⁵¹ J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1963, p. 45.

⁵² *Reports to the 1946 General Assembly*, p. 364.

all the nations?"⁵³ It was in this context that Dougall welcomed the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948: "... the new unity is given that we may more effectively proclaim the Lordship of Christ to all nations."⁵⁴

Already in 1947 the Foreign Mission Committee's Report to the General Assembly was anticipating the new emphasis on partnership in mission when it spoke of the "worldwide fellowship of giving and receiving" to which we belong, as "both the mirror and the means of [God's] healing, forgiving and transforming love."⁵⁵ India had been the cradle of such an understanding but soon it was applied to all of the Church's missionary work. By 1950 the missions in Nyasaland (later Malawi) were moving in a similar direction: "In Livingstonia, as also in Blantyre, much thought is being given to the new position of the Church in the forefront of missionary effort. The news of progress in the Indian fields in the direction of integration, together with the lessons of African experience in the partnership of Church and Mission have led Mission Councils to look ahead. They ask what arrangements will encourage the Church to assume more responsibility and how the Mission and the missionary can best fit in to a policy in which the Church is central."⁵⁶ This set the agenda for the remainder of the 20th century as responsibility was passed to the indigenous churches that had emerged through the influence of the Scottish missions and the relationship between the two came to be understood as one of partnership.

While Dougall played a leading role in promoting the handover of responsibility from the mission to the church, he was equally concerned that mission should be found at the heart of the church's concerns. He was fond of quoting the Foreign Mission Committee Minute of 1947 which stated that: "The Church of Scotland has from the beginning regarded its foreign missionary enterprise as an integral part of the life of the Church, springing of necessity from the nature of the Church itself. It has in the same way placed at the centre of its concern the bringing into

⁵³ *Reports to the 1947 General Assembly*, p. 345.

⁵⁴ *Reports to the 1949 General Assembly*, p. 338.

⁵⁵ *Reports to the 1947 General Assembly*, p. 345.

⁵⁶ *Reports to the 1950 General Assembly*, pp. 389-90.

being of living branches of the Church in other lands which should accept for themselves the same missionary obligation the discharge of which is one of the essential marks of a living Church."⁵⁷ When writing to Norman Goodall of the London Missionary Society in the mid-1950s about the burning question of the integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council, Dougall was led to make a telling remark on the place of foreign mission in the life of the Church of Scotland. In a context where many feared that the integration of the International Missionary Council into the World Council of Churches would lead to a side-lining of distinctively missionary concerns, Dougall commented: I would agree that the goal is a single ecumenical structure ... and that the creation of a WCC Commission on the World Mission of the Church offers at least the broad outline of a solution". He then continued:

I think there is some analogy, though I would not press it too far, between the position you put forward as the goal of the WCC-IMC relations and the FMC [Foreign Mission Committee] position in the Church of Scotland as contrasted with the missionary 'society' organisation. I know only too well the disadvantages of the arrangement by which the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is responsible for all its missionary activity. Where the Church is not as a whole alive to the call of the overseas guilds, the missionary enthusiast has a stiff fight against apathy and indifference. He has no appeal to a special constituency of supporters. There is always the danger of ecclesiastical narrowness and conservatism, and the competition of other nearer and more pressing claims. And yet I think it is worthwhile to be a Church Committee and to be able to press for the same attention as the Home Board or Maintenance of the Ministry. The 'Society' type of organisation, though it gains a lot in concentration and special appeal, has forfeited (or so it seems to me) the position that the missionary concern is the concern of the whole Church and that the missionary is the Church's representative working for Churches overseas, which are themselves responsible for missionary expansion."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, Minute 8799, 15 April 1947; cit. e.g. *Reports to the 1957 General Assembly*, p. 453.

⁵⁸ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev Norman Goodall, 1 December 1954.

This realistic recognition of the difficulties of integrating mission into the regular organisation of the Church is coupled with an appreciation of the great strengths of this approach. Dougall saw the formation of the World Council of Churches as a new opportunity to "overcome the dualism which relegates missions to one group while the Church as a whole goes on as before."⁵⁹ This was something that he believed could be achieved by the model practised by the Church of Scotland. It did mean, however, that the cause of mission rested squarely on the responsibility of the Church: "... we cannot expect the missionary enterprise to go ahead until there is a change in the Church at home."⁶⁰

Conclusion

James Dougall could be regarded as a conservative, even Canute-like, figure. His work could be understood as an effort to fight a rearguard action to maintain the foreign mission enterprise of the Church of Scotland when trends both at home and abroad demonstrated that its time had passed. However, amidst an approach that greatly valued the tradition of missionary work built up over the years, there emerged strands which proved to be forward-looking and prophetic – the indigenization of the faith, the contextualization of the gospel, the church as the agent of mission, partnership of churches in mission and new models of missionary service. The extent to which Dougall was an architect of post-war Church of Scotland foreign mission policy can be gauged by observing the conclusions of its 1999 Partner Church Consultation, held at St Andrew's.⁶¹ Its focus on themes such as evangelism, education, holistic mission and prophetic ministry, which had been so prominent in Dougall's thinking, demonstrate the extent of his influence. Above all, at a time when the Church's foreign mission enterprise was apparently going into decline, he was able to set it in a theological context which opened up new horizons: "The mission of the Church does not originate in Edinburgh or in Geneva or in Rome, but in the eternal will of God the Father

⁵⁹ Cit. David H.S. Lyon, *In Pursuit of a Vision*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1998, p. 73.

⁶⁰ J.W.C. Dougall to Dr J.C. Alexander, 30 November 1945.

⁶¹ *Partner Church Consultation Report*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of World Mission, 1999.

and in the historic mission of the Son into the world and in the dispersion of the primitive Church in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is but one mission in all six continents, which means that all Christ's people in every land are, or ought to be, involved in a fellowship of faith for the advancement of his kingdom at home and in all the world."⁶² This enabled him to call the Church, as one episode in mission drew towards a close, to look to "...the next missionary impulse..."⁶³ In this way he served as a bridging figure, connecting the Church's missionary tradition to new frontiers and new ways of working which now appeared on the horizon.

⁶² Church of Scotland General Assembly 1969, Verbatim Record, p. 505.

⁶³ Church of Scotland General Assembly 1968, Verbatim Record, p. 477.

13. Edinburgh 1910 and Scottish Experience of Serving in Mission 1950-2000¹

Edinburgh 1910 has often been discussed in terms of the effect that it has on mission theology and policy. This chapter seeks to examine the lived experience of people who were influenced by the movement that emerged from the famous 1910 conference. In so doing, it aims to shed light on the significance of the conference as well as unearthing an aspect of Scotland's story that has not always been adequately recognised. A wealth of raw material was generated by a day conference on "Roots and Fruits: Retrieving Scotland's Missionary Story" which was held at the International Christian College in Glasgow on 25 April 2009. Participants were invited to write a 1,000-word reflection and thirty-three chose to do so. These were people who had gone overseas from Scotland in the service of God's mission. Their experience extended to Argentina, Bhutan, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Israel/Palestine, Jamaica, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, and Zambia.

They were asked not to offer a narrative of what transpired through missionary work in the countries where they served, but rather, to try to reveal the inner spirit and the guiding philosophy that inspired the effort. What was the aim of Scottish missionary work? What were its core values? What were its main spiritual and intellectual dimensions? Lest this seem too abstract an approach for some, an alternative approach suggested was that they might use the project to review their own personal involvement overseas, reflecting on the expectations, the reality and the outcomes of their missionary service. E. Stanley Jones starts his famous book *The Christ of the Indian Road* with these words: "When the early evangelists of the Good News were sent out on their own, they returned and told Jesus 'what they had done and what they had taught'. This evangelist must add a third to what he had done and what he has taught

¹ Note: the original version of this chapter was co-authored with James L. Wilkie, former Church of Scotland Africa Secretary, for many years my boss, friend and mentor.

– *what he has learned.*"² This would be true of many, if not all, of those whose reflections form this chapter. Without exception they are deeply grateful for the experience they had and what stands out is how much they learned through it.

Five themes recurred in the papers that were presented:

1. How the legacy of 1910 worked out in the implementation of mission policy.
2. How individual people obeyed and developed God's call to be a missionary.
3. "Stuff happens": mission in the midst of social change and the politics of the real world.
4. Was there a distinctively Scottish dimension to missionary involvement?
5. Seeking to serve God's mission today.

The Legacy of Edinburgh 1910 in the Implementation of Mission Policy

Where there is abundant evidence of the legacy of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference is in regard to what was then described as "The Church on the Mission Field".³ As the 20th century progressed the "younger churches" established through missionary initiatives matured in strength. The role of the missionary was to "decrease" in order that local leaders might "increase". As Tony Ashcroft looks back on his years in Madagascar from 1958 he reflects: "Since leaving the Tanala [forest people] in the hands of a very capable local pastor I am convinced that my decision to hand over my missionary responsibility to the Malagasy church was the right one. Over the years my oversight of the churches in the Betsileo area was taken over by local leaders and the pastoral college

² Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, London; Hodder & Stoughton, 1925, p. 15, my italics.

³ See World Missionary Conference, 1910, *The Church in the Mission Field*, Report of Commission II, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910.

where I had become director was given to someone more capable than I was. To me this was success."⁴

In terms of authority and governance, this meant that the missionary-controlled Mission Councils gave way to government by the appropriate bodies of the local church. Anne Hepburn recalls that in Blantyre, Malawi, during the 1950s, "the policy of integration was agreed and implemented gradually. For a short time, there was a joint council of elected missionaries and African representatives of the Church. When this joint council was dissolved all authority passed to the Blantyre Synod of the CCAP by which time Church of Scotland ministers were fully recognised ministers of the CCAP."⁵ In a parallel movement at Livingstonia, in the north of Malawi, the Mission Council was dissolved and, as Eric Jeffrey recalls: "There was a very moving service in Livingstonia church where all ministers and elders formally left the Church of Scotland and were welcomed into the CCAP [Church of Central Africa Presbyterian]. For probably the first time in all of Central and Southern Africa, Africans had authority over Europeans. The trust was in the belief that they would use this new power responsibly. We were not disappointed."⁶

Janet Brown provides a good example of the understanding of missionary vocation which had come to prevail by the 1960s: "I was to be a living expression of the partnership between the Church of Scotland and the Church of Pakistan, a link between those partners, sharing in the life and work of the Church in Pakistan and having a part in equipping its members to be 'the people of God in Pakistan' and in serving the wider community through its educational work."⁷ The experience of becoming fully accepted as part of the local church was a deeply moving one for many missionaries during the middle years of the 20th century. Dorothy Wal-

⁴ Tony Ashcroft, "Roots and Fruits – Madagascar," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 3.

⁵ Anne Hepburn, "Roots and Fruits – Malawi 1950-1966," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

⁶ Eric W.S. Jeffrey, "Roots and Fruits – Northern Malawi," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 3.

⁷ Janet Brown, "Reflections on Time Spent in Pakistan," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

lace, who served at Darjeeling in north India, recalls; "The Synod Executive decided to appoint six delegates to visit all parts of Rajasthan and report to Synod. My name was suggested as one of the delegates but someone said, 'she's a foreign missionary'. The Moderator replied, 'She's here as an elected member, not as a foreign missionary, so she has every right to represent the Synod.' I was appointed one of the delegates to visit Rajasthan which was a wonderful experience, and I really felt I had accomplished what God wanted me to be – a part of his church in North India."⁸ Likewise Margaret MacGregor recalls that: "The Bengal Church Council (United Church of Northern India) was the first to have Integration ... and those of us who had come from abroad, sent by the Church of Scotland or the London Missionary Society, felt that we were treated as people, not as a race apart, and were expected to play a full part in the life of the church."⁹

Somewhat against its original intention, Edinburgh 1910 cast a vision of growing ecumenical convergence leading to organic unity of the churches. It was a vision that found remarkable fulfilment in mid-century in such countries as China and India. Yet it is a vision that has receded in more recent decades. As Murdoch Mackenzie comments sadly: "As we approach the centenary of Edinburgh 1910 I suppose our biggest disappointment in life is the lack of seriousness with which most churches and most Christians entertain the possibility of full organic unity."¹⁰

What did happen was that a stream of missionary co-operation flowed through Edinburgh 1910. In the mission 'fields' comity agreements among missionary organisations (mentioned by Norman Macrae as already existing in Nigeria), developed in almost all the areas where the Church of Scotland's missionaries operated and led to individual countries being "divided up" among those seeking to do mission there: "You

⁸ Dorothy Wallace, "Darjeeling, Eastern Himalaya Diocese, Church of North India," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, pp. 1-2.

⁹ Margaret S. MacGregor, "Roots and Fruits: Bengal," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

¹⁰ Murdoch and Anne Mackenzie, "Roots and Fruits: Madras, India, 1966-1978," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 2.

go to the left hand and I will go to the right". This in turn reduced rivalry and led in time, first to cooperation through Missionary Associations and Christian Councils, and later, as trust developed, to united national churches. The United Church of Zambia, founded in 1965, was one of these. The mission board of the Church of Scotland wholeheartedly embraced this tradition. It was led in this by James Dougall who was massively influential in policy over many years, and later Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin was its inspiration.

The Missionary Call

"You touch the heart of the modern missionary movement when you enter this sphere [of the missionary call]. For while it is a movement which has many dimensions and is capable of being considered from many different angles, it was with this sense of call that every missionary career began and it was this inner momentum which lent a distinctive quality to missionary service."¹¹ This distinctive sense of being called to missionary service clearly marked the experience of the pioneering missionaries of the 19th century and it remained sharp and definitive in the later years of the 20th century. This can be illustrated by a number of examples that also show the variety of forms in which the missionary call could be received.

Elspeth Kerr recalls how her journey to service at Tabeetha School in Jaffa began on a winter's evening in 1969 at Jordanhill Church in Glasgow: "My minister, the Revd Dr Michael Orr preached from St Luke chapter 12 and took his text from verse 4: 'Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required.' What had this to do with me? I had a wonderful teaching job, which I so enjoyed and a busy social life. Why should I give it all up? The call of God was so insistent that I could do no other and so it was to Jaffa that I came."¹²

¹¹ Kenneth R. Ross, "Serving by Going: The Missionary Call Then and Now," in David Wright and David Stay eds., *Serving the Word of God*, Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2002, p. 121.

¹² Elspeth Kerr, "Roots and Fruits – Israel/Palestine," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

The missionary movement often acted as its own recruiting agent with missionary vocation being nurtured through family life and circles of friends. Alasdair Morton recalls that, "An aunt had been a missionary in Manchuria ... She and other missionaries I met on furlough further whetted my appetite for following in the footsteps of some. Africa particularly interested and challenged me and I read widely in that area. In second year at secondary school I made my commitment not only to Christ as his follower but to aim at missionary service in Africa."¹³

John and Muriel Berkeley were experienced medical doctors and in the midst of bringing up their family when, at the 1963 Keswick Convention, they sensed a call to "full-time" service. It took much persistence, faith and determination to see them reach the point five years later when they began their leprosy work in Bhutan. Their work helped to bring leprosy under control in Bhutan and their dedicated work offered a practical Christian witness in a context where proselytization was strictly forbidden.¹⁴

After a lifetime in nursing Molly Paton took the opportunity afforded by early retirement to offer for missionary service, an offer that took her to Ghana where she worked from 1992 to 1997. She is clear on the motivating factors: "The main aim was certainly to show the people of Ghana in practical ways the love of Christ. However, I feel strongly that there was an element of trying to atone for the previous involvement of the British in the slave trade."¹⁵

Those who embraced a missionary vocation, by and large, express a high degree of fulfilment. Vernon Stone, for example, recalls in regard to his years in Malawi in the 1950s that: "not only was I preaching the Gospel constantly, I was also using all my previous education and training to keep a whole enterprise going – administering affairs, keeping accounts,

¹³ Alasdair Morton, "Zambia," "Roots and Fruits," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

¹⁴ John and Muriel Berkeley, "Roots and Fruits," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, pp. 1-5.

¹⁵ Molly Paton, "My Ghanaian Experience," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

even sometimes, God help them and me, supervising buildings. I was fully stretched and happy."¹⁶

As Clarence Musgrave reflects on his call he remarks: "It was a question of being prepared to 'be', rather than to 'do', and in the 'being' to find out what required to be done – or perhaps more pertinently, what I might be able to do, given my total lack of experience of work in any part of Africa. My recollection of the conversations with the Secretaries of the Overseas Council reinforces this rather non-specific approach. I was encouraged to look, listen and keep quiet, until I had got some experience under my belt which might equip me to make a contribution to discussions within the Church."¹⁷

Carol Jeffrey looks back on her years of teaching in Ghana during the 1950s and reports that; "I had the great privilege of going back in 2006 and meeting up with about 15 of my former pupils and campers and also some of the men who had been at boys' camps in the '50s. Many had found that following Christ was often difficult, but all those I met still rejoice in his love and care. Many are still actively involved as elders and teachers in their churches and in voluntary Christian work ... How marvellous to have played a small part in this."¹⁸

The reflections of retired missionaries, again and again, strike this note of marvelling at how much they *received* through the exercise of their calling. Reflecting on his experience in Kenya, Laurie Campbell comments that: "'mission' is two-way traffic and ... [the missionaries'] contribution to the World Church was hugely enhanced by what they received from the people of God in Kenya, as much as by what they were able to give.

¹⁶ Vernon Stone, "Reflections on Malawi 1949-56 and Zambia 1956-67," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

¹⁷ Joan and Clarence Musgrave, "Roots and Fruits – Zambia," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 2.

¹⁸ Carol Jeffrey, "Gold Coast / Ghana: A Reflection," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, pp. 1-2.

Unless we see it that way then, ... our Church mission theology is still marked by its own in-built colonialism."¹⁹

People responded to God's Spirit in different ways. Some took personal responsibility for their training, and personally negotiated their placements overseas. Some were guided by a personal 'guru', e.g. Lesslie Newbigin. Most turned to their Church: "Here am I, I believe God is calling me to mission, please test my call, train me and work out with me where you believe God wants me to go." For most of the period we are considering this last approach worked very well. Initial training was given partly in Scotland at St. Colm's Missionary College, and training - especially in the local language - continued "on the field" under the supervision of senior missionaries. Thus the sense of call ripened into a steady process of formation and ultimately to a period of service that proved to be very fulfilling. Though often isolated from compatriots, sometimes exposed to a significant level of dangers and always living very modestly, those who accepted and fulfilled the missionary call have no regrets that they did so.

Mission amidst Social and Political Change

The missionary engagement that resulted from acceptance of the call by both the individual and the Church was not conducted in a vacuum. Nor was its influence restricted to a private spiritual sphere. On the contrary, it has been marked by profound interaction, at every level, with its social and political context. This is well illustrated in Scotland's "special relationship" with Malawi that has ensured that missionary service has been inextricably interwoven with the political destiny of the nation, particularly at moments of crisis. Anne Hepburn recalls the imposition of the State of Emergency in Nyasaland (as Malawi was then known) in 1959. The underlying cause of this crisis was the near-unanimous opposition of the African population to the racist Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Being close to the people, the Scottish missionaries were sensitive to this strong feeling and relayed the criticisms being made of the racist political arrangements to the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church

¹⁹ Laurie Campbell, "Roots and Fruits – Kenya," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, pp. 1-2.

of Scotland which in turn could, and did, influence British Government policy in the direction of full independence for Malawi.²⁰ Important in this was the fact that the Church not only spoke but acted. The passing of authority in church life from European to African hands, suggests Eric Jeffrey, "... made real impact not only in church circles but throughout Malawi and beyond as the implications of what occurred sank in. The Church was demonstrating the wind of change not only to the authorities in Malawi but also to the British Government in Westminster. It made the movement towards independence and self-rule much smoother than it might have been."²¹

In neighbouring Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) Bill Mackenzie found himself amidst a parallel struggle for political independence: "... our district, Chinsali, became the main stage for a Cha-Cha-Cha, a merry dance around the security forces. To show their frustration over the issue of independence UNIP closed roads, burnt bridges and schools – having removed the Bibles from them. Many went into hiding in the bush and ministry took me there among them. After his release from prison in 1961 Kenneth Kaunda, son of our first minister, came to his home near Lubwa where we planned a private church meeting. This turned into a very public meeting which led to my falling foul of the provincial government, but I believe it was a turning point in the political agenda. In spite of the nickname 'Mr UNIP' I took no active part in the political scene."²²

Ian Moir began his work in South Africa as Superintendent for Pholela Training and High School in Natal a few years after the Bantu Education Act of 1955 had led to mission schools being integrated into the system of African Education that was developed under apartheid. Moir soon

²⁰ Anne Hepburn, "Roots and Fruits – Malawi 1950-1966," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 2; see further Andrew C. Ross, *Colonialism to Cabinet Crisis: A Political History of Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere Series, 2009, pp. 179-205.

²¹ Eric W.S. Jeffrey, "Roots and Fruits – Northern Malawi," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 3.

²² Bill Mackenzie, "Lubwa, Northern Rhodesia/Zambia," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 2.

discovered that the students were "no longer the grateful recipients of paternalistic goodwill, but people who had been radicalised by the black consciousness movement and were now angry young activists demanding social and political change."²³ This led to the development of pastoral practice based on the realisation articulated by Albert Nolan, South African Dominican priest, when he stated that you do not "incarnate good news into a situation; good news arises out of a situation".²⁴ Amidst these troubled times, each year Moir saw 40-50 students become members of the church.

Nowhere has mission been conditioned by its political environment more than in the Middle East where, as Colin Morton writes, "conflicting histories clash, and religion and politics are inextricably intertwined."²⁵ Particularly the situation in Israel and Palestine has called for a re-shaping of mission strategy. Morton's years as minister of the war memorial church St Andrew's Jerusalem from 1988 to 1997 saw a shift in emphasis from historic commitment to Jewish mission and unquestioning support for the state of Israel to the development of close relations with the Arab Christian community and commitment to working for justice, peace and reconciliation within the region. Morton recalls: "St Andrew's became a place where Palestinians and Israelis, Muslims and Jews could meet, and much was done to encourage pilgrims and tourists not only to visit the dead stones, but also to meet the living stones of the land."²⁶ Christians, under the pressure of the situation, are emigrating from the Middle East in unprecedented numbers, raising questions as to the future of Christian faith in the region of its origin. Offering meaningful solidarity has become a gospel imperative and this has motivated people like Colin Morton to commit their lives to this calling. Another Church-run institution which has attracted the committed service of numerous Scots is Tabeetha

²³ Ian Moir, "Roots and Fruits: South Africa," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 2.

²⁴ Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa*, cit. Moir, "Roots and Fruits: South Africa," p. 2,

²⁵ Colin Morton, "Roots and Fruits: Israel/Palestine," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 2.

School in Jaffa. Elspeth Kerr comments: "Today's children are living in a world where we still have to learn 'to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God'. This they are learning in a wee, old school in downtown Jaffa."²⁷

Political developments could sometimes apparently cause great harm to missionary work, yet apparent set-backs sometimes created positive results. Norman Macrae remarks that: "One of the unforeseen consequences of [the Nigerian civil war] was the end of the direct Scottish mission connection with the Church. Our mission area had been almost exclusively within the Biafran enclave ... which had tried to secede from the Federation of Nigeria, and those of our mission staff who were there at the time had inevitably become closely involved with refugee and famine relief in the Biafran area. After the defeat of the Biafran cause, they were no longer acceptable to the Nigerian authorities or allowed to remain.... As has happened in other countries the departure of missionary partners was followed by the growth and further expansion of the local church."²⁸

These reflections indicate that for the most part Scots who saw themselves as foreign missionaries operated in areas where the British Raj provided access and some security. (Chaplains to expatriates of course were in a different situation). The break-up of the British Empire affected the politics of almost every area. However the insistence by mission boards that missionaries learned local languages meant that they were well placed to understand and identify with the aspirations of the local people. This enabled them to make the somewhat bumpy ride to independent nationhood in warm supportive company.

Was there a Distinctively Scottish Dimension to Missionary Involvement?

One function of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference was to demonstrate the wide commonality that characterised the Western missionary movement as a whole. In terms of attitudes and programmes

²⁷ Elspeth Kerr, "Roots and Fruits – Israel/Palestine," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 2.

²⁸ Norman C. Macrae, "But Why Edinburgh?," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 3-4.

there is much that is essentially the same, regardless of the national character of the missionary effort. It is therefore not necessarily easy to identify distinctive features in Scottish missionary endeavour. Nonetheless, David Cairns, who played a notable role at Edinburgh 1910 as the Chairman of Commission Four on the relation of Christianity to other religions, the following year pointed out that, in his view, there are three elements of Scottish religious history which have a bearing on Scotland's contribution to the missionary movement. These are, as summarised by Andrew Walls:

The first of these elements is the kingdom of God – the central stream of Scottish religious life is theocratic. The aim of the preaching of the gospel ... was not simply saving souls or enlarging the church, but a Christian world society in which the legislative and economic order were brought into accordance with the mind of Christ. The second significant element Cairns identifies in Scottish religious life is the vital importance of the church.... The third element is strong theology, the tradition of strong thinking in religion, an element he saw as much needed in the contemporary flabby intellectual climate.²⁹

These distinctive features do appear to have run through to the later 20th century. Many of the reflections offered by missionaries of this period are marked by the "strong thinking in religion" which Cairns identified as distinctively Scottish. They also demonstrate the holistic approach of the Calvinist tradition that sought to embrace life in its totality. Howard Taylor observes that: "The Church of Scotland mission in Malawi had some characteristics which were not characteristics that all other missions had. In contrast to some other missions, it believed the salvation of Christ, as well as the creation of God, embraced body and mind as well as spirit. Therefore, at most mission stations there were a church for the spiritual, a school for the mind and a hospital for the body. Other missions may have had schools and hospitals too, but some of them saw schools and hospitals as a way in for the spiritual gospel rather than aspects of the gospel itself."³⁰

²⁹ Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, pp. 260-61.

³⁰ Ibid.

In the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, particular emphasis has been placed on the conviction that responsibility for mission lies with the church. Rather than delegating responsibility to para-church agencies or societies, the church itself should take responsibility for missionary endeavour. This found expression in such practical matters as remuneration of missionaries. Church of Scotland missionaries, regardless of professional qualifications or seniority, were paid on a standard scale from central funds. This contrasts with the "faith mission" approach where each individual missionary is responsible for raising their own support. Anne Hepburn remarks; "The Church of Scotland policy seemed to us to be more in line with the Gospel than that."³¹

At a slightly later time, Howard Taylor saw how the Scottish emphasis on the church took effect in Malawi: "The Church of Scotland saw the church as an organisation and body of believers and this was important for the nature of the gospel. Some other missions tended to see the church as relatively unimportant. The Church of Scotland's emphasis meant that Africans of the CCAP strongly guarded their view of what the church was all about. They didn't really understand such organisations as Scripture Union and the new Student Christian Organisation which considered themselves para-church organisations over which the Church had no formal control."³²

Seeking to Serve God's Mission Today

A glance at the history of Christian mission shows that it is never static. Even an event as definitive as the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference is soon out of date.³³ Whereas in 1910 the Western missionary movement assumed that it would hold the initiative for many years to come, the ensuing years have witnessed, on the one hand, in the Western world a recession of Christian faith more severe than any in history

³¹ Anne Hepburn, "Roots and Fruits – Malawi 1950-1966," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

³² Howard Taylor, "Malawi 1965-81," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

³³ See further Kenneth R. Ross and David A. Kerr, "The Commissions After a Century," in Kerr and Ross, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, pp. 307-317.

while, on the other hand, the churches which emerged on the "mission field" of the non-Western world have gone from strength to strength. This provokes sharp questions about the relation between the two and about what partnership will mean in today's context. As Roy and Jane Dodman ask: "What happens when we stretch the metaphor of roots and fruits and imagine that the fruit has dropped to the ground and the seed has sprouted and there is now a vigorous young tree growing beside the old tree? ... What happens when the young tree has become strong and vibrant and the old tree shows alarming signs of being in a state of possibly terminal decay? How do the two trees relate and how can both trees survive and produce good fruit?... Truly Scotland in the twenty-first century is a mission field."³⁴ If Scotland, and other nations that in 1910 regarded themselves as part of "the Christian world" is now categorised as a mission field, how is it going to be reached with the gospel of Christ? One factor to be considered is patterns of migration.

Migration and mission ran together in the 19th and 20th centuries but, though overlapping, they could be distinguished from one another. This is becoming ever less the case. The people who take the faith from one place to another are more often migrants or refugees than missionaries in the traditional Western sense. Dynamic witness to Jesus Christ is borne by a criss-crossing pattern of diasporic communities spread across the face of the earth. Despite the widespread resentment against immigrants from the South and the barriers put in their path, it seems safe to predict that South-to-North migration will continue to occur on a massive scale for the foreseeable future. So long as many of the migrants are people of profound and adventurous Christian faith, the potential of this vast movement to contribute to worldwide missionary engagement is enormous. The Scots International Church in Rotterdam has been alert to these new dynamics. As its minister Robert Calvert explained: "As an old migrant church we decided to stand alongside vulnerable immigrant Christians..."³⁵ The Scots Church traces its history back to 1643 when it

³⁴ Roy and Jane Dodman, "Roots and Fruits: The Jamaican Experience," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, pp. 1-2.

³⁵ Robert Calvert, "Scots International Church, Rotterdam," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 2.

began as a chaplaincy to the Scottish community in Rotterdam. It continued this service for many years and it was only at the turn of the 21st century that the congregational life took on a new character and composition. As Calvert writes: "I found myself on a steep learning curve about the 'universal' Jesus. The church now had people from more than forty nations and the team of elders was drawn from four continents. African traditions were 'blended' with our liturgy and an African rhythm group had been started by our first West African elder. A Korean Methodist church was renting space in our church and we extended the same offer to Dutch, Portuguese and French-speaking churches. Opening the hall as a place of hospitality eventually led to a weekly reception for refugees and a safe house."³⁶ Currents of mission flowing across the world and bringing fresh life to a long-established Church of Scotland congregation – here is a ministry that encapsulates the reality of the close integration of mission and migration in today's world.

As Christian mission stands at the new frontier presented by the post-Christian West, its protagonists are challenged by the question of whether the lessons learnt across 200 years of the modern missionary movement can be applied to this new situation. Can they bring all this wealth of experience home to Scotland and to God's call to mission here in the secular West? Chris Wigglesworth recalls working with people from a variety of religious traditions in India in the 1960s and 1970s in the face of serious droughts, hunger, soil erosion, deforestation, inter-communal riots etc. "Instead of seeking first the ecclesiastical joinery and politics, working with these friends day-to-day was both practically satisfying and theologically taxing."³⁷ This leads him today to conclude that: "the Church has no monopoly of God's Truth (or the Life or the Way). Certainly, seen more clearly in Christ's earthly life, today the fruits of the Spirit, the 'first-fruits of the New Creation', are sometimes found inside, but more often outside the institutional churches."³⁸ Such perspectives have profound implications for inter-faith relations and for the practice of

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Chris Wigglesworth, "Western India, the Church and I," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 2.

³⁸ Ibid.

mission. Another fresh perspective is offered by Alastair Hulbert who drew inspiration from Lesslie Newbigin's distinction of mission to individuals, mission to structures and mission to ideologies.³⁹ He finds his own vocation described in a 1991 World Council of Churches document: "There is an urgent need today for a new type of mission, not into foreign lands but into 'foreign' structures. By this term we mean economic, social and political structures which do not at all conform to Christian moral standards."⁴⁰

Conclusion

In different ways all the contributors reveal the influence of their roots in the Scottish missionary tradition. Those who obeyed God's call to go out from Scotland took the "world" seriously – the people they encountered, and the social and political contexts in which they became immersed. And they took the Church seriously, both the Church that sent them and, where they found one, that into which they became integrated.

But if they did not know this already, they quickly discovered that churches are dramatically different from one another – for when 'God comes down his own secret stair to the heart of each believer' (George Macdonald), in God's dialogue with God's world, 'culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of God'. And Churches, together with the cultures in which they are embedded, evolve with the passing years.

Our Scottish theology seems to teach us that local churches, including the churches of Scotland, are evolving products of these local dialogues. It requires all Cairns' 'strong Scottish theology' to hold these two insights together – on the one hand, God's mission in God's world today bringing God's kingdom and, on the other, Jesus' Church, his single, broken, flawed, but yet beloved body, bearing and interpreting for that world God's purpose as revealed in the tradition of the Christian Bible. God's

³⁹ Alastair Hulbert, "Mission to Structures and Ideologies," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 1.

⁴⁰ *Signs of the Spirit*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1991, p. 66, cit. Hulbert, "Mission to Structures and Ideologies," p. 1.

missionary dialogue continues – with the individuals, the structures and the ideologies of God’s world – and with his churches!

14. Non-Western Christians in Scotland: Mission in Reverse

Though Christian mission has been re-thought substantially during the past half-century, the territorial "*from the West to the rest*" model which predominated during the heyday of the Western missionary movement 1850-1950 still holds sway in popular consciousness. Indeed, the widening global economic gap between rich and poor and the American hegemony in international affairs have strengthened the expectation that initiative, in mission as in other spheres, lies with the West. It therefore comes as a surprise that there is growing evidence that Christian mission is proceeding in the opposite direction, i.e. non-Western Christians are attempting to be the agents of a re-evangelisation of the West. A primary factor making this possible is the movement of migration that is bringing unprecedented numbers of people from the non-Western world to Western countries. As Andrew Walls has observed: "The great new fact of our time – and it has momentous consequences for mission – is that the great migration has gone into reverse. There has been a massive movement, which all indications suggest will continue, from the non-Western to the Western world."¹ Among those on the move are the refugees uprooted by the many conflicts that have afflicted the developing world in recent times. Despite the widespread resentment against immigrants from the South and the barriers put in their path, it seems safe to predict that South-to-North migration will continue to occur on a massive scale for the foreseeable future.

The wide-ranging effects of immigration on Western societies are frequently debated today. One that receives relatively little attention is the effect on the composition of the Christian church and on the shape of its missionary outreach. Yet there is a profound impact on church life as congregations that have all along been ethnically and linguistically homogeneous, find themselves welcoming newcomers whose origins lie in distant continents and cultures. It also brings a remarkable new dimen-

¹ Andrew F. Walls, "Mission and Migration: The Diaspora Factor in Christian History," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 5/2 (December 2002), p. 10.

sion to Christian mission worldwide since a great many migrants carry with them their faith in Jesus Christ and seek to express it in their new context.

The Scottish Situation

In 2005, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland received for the first time a report which assessed the impact of this development on church life in Scotland.² Being located somewhat remotely on Europe's north-western seaboard, Scotland has rarely been a first port of call for non-Western immigrants to Europe. Nonetheless such immigration is clearly increasing and Scottish society is consciously taking on a much more multi-ethnic character as a result. The report therefore asks what effect this development is having on the life of the church and on the profile of Christianity in Scotland. Though the Church, like the nation, of Scotland has a strong history of international involvement, its home base has remained strongly ethnic Scottish in character. Will this change as the proportion of the population of non-Western origin increases, including in its ranks a significant number of professing Christians? The findings of the report are that non-Western Christians are coming to Scotland and contributing to Christian mission through a number of channels.

(1) There has been an intentional effort by the Church of Scotland to bring members of overseas partner churches to share in the life of Presbyteries and congregations in Scotland, usually on a short-term basis, under a "Faithshare" programme.³ Between 2000 and 2004, 48 students have come to Scotland under this programme while 36 Faithshare partners have come for periods of ministry in Presbyteries and congregations. The students have almost invariably spent a year in Scotland, usually taking a Masters course. The Faithshare partners have normally served for 4-6 months hosted by a Presbytery, though some have been longer term. For many church members the arrival of the Faithshare partner or student has been their first opportunity to be "on the receiv-

² "Mission in Reverse," *Reports to the Church of Scotland General Assembly 2005*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of Practice and Procedure, 2005, pp. 24/22-24/32.

³ Ibid, pp. 24/24-25.

ing end" of Christian life and witness originating in another part of the world.

(2) A number of ministers from overseas have entered the ministry of the Church of Scotland and have been called to serve in parish churches.⁴ Though their numbers are relatively small, they bring valuable experience and gifts for the benefit not only of their particular local situation but the life of the Kirk as a whole. The report recommends that; "The Church should take steps to ensure that it recognises the call of ministers from overseas who are led by God to offer for service in Scotland, that it provides the necessary affirmation and encouragement, and that it empowers them to make full use of their particular gifts as they minister in the Scottish context. At the same time, the Church should recognise its responsibility to its partner churches overseas and consult closely with them in regard to any question of calling one of their ministers to a charge or other appointment in Scotland. Otherwise the Church of Scotland could end up recruiting the most able ministers from partner churches to their great disadvantage."⁵

(3) Non-Western Ministers have come to Scotland with a missionary sense of vocation which they exercise outwith the formal structures of the existing churches.⁶ The report gives the example of Lucas Njenga, who in 2003 founded "Heart for the City," a project in Glasgow that combines biblical witness with concern for social renewal. The report narrates that: "After six months dedicated to understanding the culture and the people, Lucas and his wife Helen began their work among vulnerable and needy communities. The project brings together people from different ethnic and socio-economic groups for Christian teaching and worship. Open-air witness is offered at a branch of the Asda supermarket where permission has been granted for singing, dancing and preaching to take place. Lucas has been welcomed by the Presbytery of Glasgow and has worked in a cooperative way with several of its congregations. The kind of ministry he offers is geared to the modern city and to reaching

⁴ Ibid, pp. 24/25-26.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 24/25.

⁶ Ibid, p. 24/26.

parts of the community which may not be regularly in contact with the existing churches."⁷

(4) Christians from overseas who have come to Scotland for longer or shorter periods have become members or adherents of Church of Scotland congregations.⁸ Whether as students, business people or asylum seekers, Christian immigrants arriving in Scotland from outwith the UK are more numerous today than ever before. They offer a vital expression of Christian witness in Scotland today. A question that the Group asked is to what extent these immigrants have been welcomed into Church of Scotland congregations. A questionnaire was distributed in the Presbyteries of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. It was completed by 85 congregations and enabled the Group to deduce the following results: "When asked how many of the regular congregation originate from outwith the UK, five congregations answered 15 or more, twelve congregations answered between 10 and 14, nine congregations answered between 5 and 9, twenty-four congregations answered between 1 and 4, and thirty-five congregations answered 0. In other words, 70% of the sample of congregations in the major cities have less than five immigrant Christians worshipping with them."⁹

(5) Christians from overseas who have come to Scotland for longer or shorter periods have formed congregations or fellowships with a particular ethnic and/or linguistic identity.¹⁰ The report refers to twelve such congregations and suggests that there may be around twice that number in existence: "Some are worshipping in a particular mother tongue, such as Korean, Farsi, Shona or Tamil. Others are worshipping in English but sustaining a cultural and ecclesiastical identity from their place of origin. Some are formally part of a particular denomination. Others are independent. Some are functioning as churches while others aim to be more informal fellowships, encouraging their members to also participate in their local churches. Some restrict their witness and pastoral care to members of a particular ethnic group, intending to function as diaspora

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 24/26-27.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 24/27-28.

congregations for that community. Others see their function very evangelistically in terms of having a calling to bring the gospel to the people of Scotland. Some have arrived in Scotland through natural patterns of migration and continue to express their Christian faith as they settle in their new location. Others have come to Scotland with a clear missionary sense of calling to proclaim the gospel. These purposes can be intertwined."¹¹

These developments present a number of conceptual and practical challenges. This article seeks to identify what these are and to offer an initial attempt to meet them theologically.

Conceptual Challenges

Questions of Justice

Underlying the massive movement of people in our time are deep questions of justice. Why have people left their homeland? Often there are underlying injustices in the global economy that have rendered life practically unsustainable and Western nations bear their share of the responsibility for that. As the Church of Scotland "Church and Nation" Committee pointed out in 2002 when commenting on the plight of refugees and economic migrants: "the West and North are not neutral observers of their plight but bear part of the responsibility for their plight.... We cannot answer the question of why people become refugees simply in terms of internal politics and discrimination within a country, while ignoring international responsibility for the environment, and the effects of a globalised economy and politics on the poorest of the world."¹² Hence it is not open to Western societies to dismiss the growing numbers of refugees and immigrants as someone else's problem.

This leads to the question of the kind of reception that migrants receive when they reach their destination. As Andrew Walls remarks: "The developed world is faced with a paradox: it needs immigrants, but does not

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Church of Scotland Church and Nation Committee, "Refugees and Migration," *Reports to the Church of Scotland General Assembly 2005*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of Practice and Procedure, 2002, p. 12/36.

want them. In a public forum where the presence of Christian voices can be less and less taken for granted, Western Christians may find themselves increasingly called to take stances that are unpopular."¹³ Similarly Samuel Escobar observes that: "Perhaps the biggest challenge is the prophetic task of being a mouthpiece for the poor and downtrodden and pronouncing an unpopular prophetic word for a society that seems to be taken over by panic from seeing these waves of foreigners who have come to stay."¹⁴ The Church and Nation Committee has indicated some biblical principles which should govern the Christian approach to the immigrant, the economic migrant, the refugee and the asylum-seeker:

- To protect such persons from abuse, including protection from racially motivated violence and harassment;
- To protect them from unfair treatment in the courts;
- To offer varying degrees of social inclusion, depending on the foreigner's wish to assimilate;
- Most radically, to love the alien.¹⁵

It does not take very much imagination to notice how much such principles set the Christian at odds with the mood of suspicion and xenophobia that prevails in society at large. Yet the biblical mandate is unambiguous as Christine Pohl points out, after an extensive review of biblical texts on the alien and hospitality: "The biblical focus on responsibility to resident aliens suggests that a concern for the physical, social and spiritual well-being of migrants and refugees should not be peripheral to Christian life, mission and witness; instead, it should be central. In setting priorities, churches and mission organizations need to be much more attentive to these vulnerable populations."¹⁶ This may well emerge as one of the

¹³ Andrew F. Walls, "Mission and Migration: The Diaspora Factor in Christian History," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 5/2 (December 2002), p. 10.

¹⁴ Samuel Escobar, "Migration: Avenue and Challenge to Mission," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXI/1 (January 2003), p. 19.

¹⁵ Church of Scotland Church and Nation Committee, "Refugees and Migration," pp. 12/38-39.

¹⁶ Christine D. Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXI/1 (January 2003), p. 9.

points at which the political witness of the Western churches has to take on a radical and even offensive character if it is to be true to the faith.

The Nature of the Church

It is recognised that large-scale migration has brought many adherents of other faiths into Western Europe and it is widely acknowledged that the resultant growing pluralism has brought a major new dimension to our context. Indeed, recognition of the multicultural and multi-religious character of European societies has become an axiom of social policy. What has received much less attention is the fact that a significant number of immigrants choose to belong to the Christian church and understand themselves as agents of Christian mission. Yet there can be little doubt that immigration has dramatically changed the character of Christianity in Europe today. In Cologne the largest worshipping congregation is a Korean one. The largest congregation in London is a Nigerian-founded one. The largest congregation in Europe is in Kiev and again it is Nigerian-founded. A recent press release from the Council of African Christian Communities in Europe claims that: "there are more than three million Christians of African origin living in Europe".¹⁷ This introduces quite a new composition to church life in Europe. As Walter Hollenweger observes: "Christians in Britain prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black."¹⁸

Its changing composition raises questions about the nature of the church. Justo Gonzales tells of a traditional suburban American congregation that allowed a Hispanic congregation to worship in its sanctuary at 0900 on Sunday mornings, prior to their own service at 1100. What they had not reckoned with is that at 1100 the air was still heavy with the smell of garlic and this outraged the majority of the congregation. Can garlic-lovers and garlic-haters share the same church building?¹⁹ How does a Western congregation respond to incoming Africans who want to dance

¹⁷ *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXIX No. 354 (July 2000), p. 304.

¹⁸ Walter J. Hollenweger, "Foreword" in Geldoff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies*, Vol. I, p. ix.

¹⁹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 3.

during the hymns and make the service last at least two hours? An easy answer is for the church to worship in monocultural units but is that what the church is called to be? Jürgen Moltmann offers a clear answer: "The Church of the crucified Christ cannot consist of an assembly of like persons who mutually affirm each other, but must be constituted of unlike persons. 'Like seeks after like' as Aristotle says in his discussion of friendship (Ethics Book VIII). But for the crucified Christ, this principle of fellowship is fellowship with those who are different, and solidarity with those who have become alien and have been made different."²⁰ There is need to acknowledge the reality that this question takes a specifically racial form today, as it has done in previous contexts in the history of Christian mission. A generation ago the Church of Scotland was facing the question of integrating its predominantly white congregations into the emerging black-led Presbyterian Churches in Africa. James Dougall, General Secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee, indicated the issue at stake when he remarked: "The question of the Church, one might say, the very test of the existence of the true Church, is whether it can demonstrate to the world a living fellowship which bridges the gap between the races."²¹ This question is asked today not in distant lands only but also on Scottish soil.

Alan Lewis underlines the importance of this ecclesiological question in today's context: "The church [is] no agglomeration of atomistic members who decide to be together for reasons of self-interest, on the basis of whatever variant – colour, age, location, race, class, or race – sets them apart from other human groupings. Rather, Christ chooses our neighbours for us – including the uncongenial and quite unlike us, socially, ethnically, temperamentally – and connects us to them, his brothers and sisters and therefore ours, in an integrated fellowship which transcends both time and space and every boundary between races, classes, nationalities and generations. To practise such connectedness in the church is

²⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, London: SCM Press, 1974, p. 28; cit. Graham Kings, "Multicultural Communities: Identity and Diversity," *Swedish Missiological Themes*, Vol. 90/4 (2002), p. 510.

²¹ J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1963, p. 55.

not only to be set in conflict with this era's highly individualised piety and with its ecclesiastical cognate of radically independent congregationalism. It is also to provide to the privatized and factionalized secular culture of the postmodern world an alternative understanding and enactment of humanness as such."²²

Agency in Mission

Not only is the composition of the church changing, the shape of its mission is being transformed by the impact of migration. For Christian faith, this is not the first time it finds itself being carried across the world by migrant peoples. When we examine the pattern of expansion that took the early church around the Mediterranean world, we find that it followed the pattern of migration which had been formed by the Jewish diaspora. It was this that took the Jesus movement to Antioch and thence to Corinth, Rome, Philippi and the other centres that are familiar from the New Testament. The journey of Christianity from its original Jewish base into the Greek world of thought and into the political arena of the Roman empire is writ large in the New Testament. When we look at the subsequent history we see that Christianity has been a mobile faith, a travelling religion. It seems to be at its best when it is packing its bags and going somewhere new. As David Bosch remarked: "I believe that the church discovers her true nature only as she moves from one human world to another, when she crosses frontiers, whether these are geographical, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or sociological."²³

Many thought the Christian faith might be finished when the Roman Empire was collapsing but Christianity had already embarked on a new epoch among the so-called barbarians of northern Europe. Likewise, in our own time, when its long-time European home is becoming inhospitable, Christian faith has already departed for new homelands in the great southern continents. It has been said that Christianity is the only world religion to end up as a minority faith in its region of origin. It seems to be

²² Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, p. 350.

²³ David Bosch, *Spirituality for the Road*, Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1979, p. 58.

not a faith to settle down permanently in one place. It comes into its own when it is crossing some new frontier and making itself at home in a new context. It is a migratory religion.

The vulnerability of the migrant has often proved to be an opportunity for evangelism as, through their experience of uprootedness, people on the move have been brought to faith. Christine Pohl observes that, "As refugees attempt to rebuild lives out of fragments of their past and within new situations, they are often far more open to the gospel than they previously might have been. Wrenched from all that is familiar, and betrayed by what they had often held to be precious, many are looking for ways to make sense of their experience, survival, and loss."²⁴ It has been observed that even people who have been fairly indifferent about religious practice in their own context, become much more seriously committed when they find themselves suddenly in an alien environment. It is difficult to survive as a migrant and so networks of kindred spirits are highly valued and such networks often revolve around a religious identity. The many Scots Kirks or St Andrew's or St Columba's on distant shores bear witness to the experience of Scottish migrants in previous generations and it is a powerful current among the migrant peoples of today.

The organisational pattern of mission also starts to look quite different from that which prevailed in the Western missionary movement. There is no mistaking the fact that the gospel is spreading through migratory movements but there is no sign of anything like a missionary society. There is no head office, no organising committee, no command structure, no comprehensive strategic direction. It seems to be a disorganised movement of individuals making their own connections, developing their own perspectives and functioning within networks that they themselves have constructed. How could the older missionary movement relate to the new pattern?

One of the sharpest critiques of the Western missionary movement was published by Roland Allen almost 100 years ago. In a book called *Missionary Methods St Paul's or Ours?* he contrasted the Pauline mission

²⁴ Christine D. Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXI/1 (January 2003), p. 4.

which was powerless in worldly terms and therefore dependent on the Holy Spirit with what he saw as the alliance of the modern missionary movement with the power of the Western world.²⁵ Were Allen alive today he might be surprised to see that the identification of Christianity with the powerful is increasingly a thing of the past. More and more the agents of Christian mission come from among the weak, the broken and the vulnerable. It is a new kind of agency but is it not one that has greater affinity to Paul – and to Jesus – than the form of missionary presence that often appeared to be allied to imperial power and economic exploitation? Increasingly we see emerging a situation opposite to the one that troubled Roland Allen. More and more it is the poor who are taking the gospel to the rich. Africa is the world's poorest continent and unsurprisingly the one from which the greatest number of migrants originate. It is also the continent with the most vibrant expansion of Christian faith. Hence many migrants come from the new heartlands of Christianity and bring the flame of faith to the old centres in the north where the fire is burning low. What will be the effect of this 21st century movement of mission? It is hard to say but it certainly looks already very different from the one that prevailed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Already the impact of this new missionary movement begins to be felt in Europe. Andrew Walls observes that: "It is clear that [African and Afro-Caribbean] churches are among the few expanding sectors of European Christianity. It is also clear that they are beginning to have an impact on the indigenous Western population, for some of whom, being untouched by traditional culture-Christianity, immigrants from Africa or Asia (and in Spain, from Latin America) provide the first contact with Christianity as a living faith."²⁶ African church leaders are starting to see this as part of the mission of their churches. Archbishop Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja in Nigeria, observed that: 'The stream of Africans coming to Europe has become a river. Even if the Church did not want to take notice of this fact before, it should now. I believe priests from places like Nigeria can re-

²⁵ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods St Paul's or Ours: A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces*, London: Robert Scott, 1912.

²⁶ Andrew F. Walls, "Mission and Migration: The Diaspora Factor in Christian History," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 5/2 (December 2002), 10-11.

evangelise Europe. One hundred and fifty years ago, it was Europeans who were doing the evangelising. Now we should have two churches at work – African and European."²⁷

What is less clear is how far European churches have awoken to this new dimension of mission on their continent. As Miguel Palomino observes: "Latino evangelical immigrants are already doing mission among their peers, and also among their host Europeans in what could be called mission in reverse. It remains to be seen, however, whether European churches will endorse what they are doing."²⁸ In the path of such endorsement stands a range of presuppositions and prejudices that are challenged by this new missionary movement. Gerrie ter Haar indicates some of the dynamics that are at play: "The reversal of roles implied by the notion of an African mission to Europe stands many conventional ideas on their head. Europeans traditionally see Africans as being on the receiving end, and themselves on the giving end, of a relationship which is often equated with black-white relations. Moreover, Europeans are inclined to believe that the proper place for Africans is in Africa. The idea of an African mission to Europe thus appears inappropriate to the marginal status of black immigrants in their society. To many native Europeans the recent foundation of African Christian congregations is an anomaly. In fact, the rise of African and other non-Western Christian congregations is nothing less than a new phase in the religious history of Europe."²⁹

Practical Challenges

Openness and Accessibility

Widespread testimony suggests that European congregations are not readily accessible to incoming non-Western Christians. Gerrie ter Haar

²⁷ "African Bishops Come to the Aid of Europe," *The Tablet*, 20.11.2004, p. 33.

²⁸ Miguel A. Palomino, "Latino Immigration in Europe: Challenge and Opportunity for Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 28/2 (April 2004), p. 58.

²⁹ Gerrie Ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998, p. 3.

goes so far as to say that, "In Britain the unfriendly reception accorded to black immigrants by the established churches was the immediate reason for Africans and Afro-Caribbeans to found independent churches."³⁰ Likewise she observes that: "Remarkably, with the exception of the Roman Catholics, none of the traditional mainline churches in Africa and Europe, such as the Presbyterian or Methodist Church, has been successful in attracting the support of significant numbers of African Christians living in Europe. This is no doubt related to the particular structure of these former mission churches, whose organisation appears less adaptable than that of the African international churches to the unique circumstances created by migration. Members who attended one of the mainline churches when they lived in Africa have therefore usually been more or less obliged to join one of the newly emerged African international churches."³¹ This is not a record on which European churches can look back with any pride. It is clearly important to incoming non-Western Christians that they should be received hospitably by the European churches. The report to the 2005 Church of Scotland General Assembly concludes that: "In their vulnerability immigrant congregations look to the Kirk for affirmation, solidarity, and support. At the same time, they have a capacity to reach parts of Scottish society which the Kirk does not easily reach and collaboration in mission to Scotland has rich potential. What makes it difficult is the cultural, liturgical and theological differences between the immigrant congregation and the local kirk. Yet these differences can be a source of mutual enrichment once the initial barriers are broken down."³² Immigrant Christians are in need of a hospitable response from long-established churches.

Perhaps equally important are the lessons that can be learned by the European churches through the experience of being hospitable. Irene Pluim and Elza Kuyk comment that: "The realisation that the Uniting Protestant Churches in the Netherlands are so 'white' in comparison to the rest of society gives food for thought, for it says something about the closed character of our churches. What applies to migrants could also,

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid, p. 98.

³² "Mission in Reverse" p. 24/28.

mutatis mutandis, apply to 'newcomers' in general."³³ They therefore urge the European churches to be proactive in their approach. "We encourage the European churches who invest a lot of money in exchange programs with partner churches abroad that similar investment is necessary in the migrant churches in our own villages and cities."³⁴ Martin Affolderbach and Heike Vierling-Ihrig argue for a twofold approach: "Wherever this is possible, immigrant Christians should be offered a chance to integrate into the local congregations on the one hand, while on the other hand it should be tried to preserve their identity."³⁵ In Germany, for example, the United Evangelical Mission has established a Programme for Cooperation between German and Immigrant Congregations which aims to:

- Assist immigrant churches to establish presence within the context of German churches and society;
- Help German churches to understand and appreciate the movement of reverse mission that is taking place through the presence of immigrant congregations;
- Develop projects of common mission/intercultural evangelism.³⁶

Much more could be done to draw immigrant Christians into the worship and witness of the Church of Scotland. Its Board of National Mission's provision of "statistics for mission" allows Presbyteries and congregations to identify the ethnic minorities in their vicinity and to form strategy accordingly. Learning from congregations that have been effective in

³³ Irene M. Pluim & Elza Kuyk, *Relations with Migrant Churches: Experiences and Perspectives*, Utrecht: Kerkinactie, 2002, p. 17.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 19.

³⁵ Martin Affolderbach & Heike Vierling-Ihrig, *Culture Divides – the Gospel Unites? Migrant Churches in European Countries*, Brussels: Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, 2002, p. 14.

³⁶ Claudia Währisch-Oblau, "From Reverse Mission to Common Mission ... We Hope: Immigrant Protestant Churches and the 'Programme for Cooperation Between German and Immigrant Congregations' of the United Evangelical Mission," *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 89, No. 354 (July 2000), p. 467.

receiving immigrant Christians into their fellowship, it is possible to suggest that good practice will include:

- Identifying immigrant communities locally and reaching out with a welcoming invitation.
- Introducing pictures, food or furniture which enable newcomers from a particular cultural background to feel at home.
- Encouraging immigrants to take leading roles in the life and worship of the congregation and being open to innovations which they bring.
- Organising a study or fellowship group particularly geared to the needs of immigrant Christians.
- Inviting newcomers from overseas to share meals or other occasions in the homes of church members.

It is time to recognise that many Christian immigrants bring to Scotland a fresh and vibrant faith with a capacity to refresh local Christian life and witness. For congregations that have always been ethnically and culturally homogeneous, it requires a considerable adjustment to absorb new members from very different backgrounds. Yet is this not one of the great challenges to the integrity of the Church in our time?

Learning Mode

A deep challenge for European churches is that they have been accustomed to being "in control" of the Christian message and its expression in church life. The opportunity to go into learning mode and discover from the experience of others new ways of understanding, experiencing and communicating the gospel is not easily grasped. Christine Pohl observes that: "... it is easy for people from more privileged settings to imagine that resources and assets flow one way; they easily overlook the gifts of guests and strangers. At times, people familiar with the role of host resist strangers' and guests' desire to give, and resist any acknowledgement that they themselves might have needs."³⁷ The extent of this

³⁷ Christine D. Pohl, "Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXI/1 (January 2003), p. 13.

challenge to learn again the meaning of the gospel by responding to a new global movement of Christian faith is explained by Philip Wickeri: "... the most dynamic sections of Christianity today are in movements emerging outside its established centres: The African Initiated Churches (or AICs), Pentecostals all over the world; the rural churches of China; new indigenous Christian communities throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. They represent a popular Christianity, a mission from below, a mission of transformation. Their emphasis is on oral tradition, lay leadership and maximised participation confront historic Protestant churches with our carefully scripted, over-clericalized approaches to church life.... Those of us from the historic Protestant churches need to be in dialogue with popular Christianity, both to share our understanding of the gospel with each other, and also to better understand and learn from the spirit which moves new Christian communities."³⁸

Conclusion

It is clear that through the immigration of non-Westerners, Christianity in Scotland is finding new forms of expression. What will be the chemistry between the old and the new? Will they react against each other and go their separate ways? Will well-established churches give the cold shoulder to new groups whose spirituality seems strange? Will newcomers shun the older churches, writing them off as dull or dead? Or will they find fruitful forms of interaction? Will Christianity be found fragmented into groups united by their ethnicity, including groups of ethnic Scots? Or will ways be found to show that the faith that unites is stronger than any identity that divides? These are questions to be answered in the next generation.

³⁸ Philip L. Wickeri, "Mission from the Margins: The *Missio Dei* in the Crisis of World Christianity," *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 93 No. 369 (April 2004), p. 195.

15. The Scots Abroad: Migration and Mission

"The Scots are notoriously migratory," observed G.T. Bisset-Smith in 1909.¹ Janette Brock's more recent study concludes that: "it is justifiable to describe the Scots as an exceptionally mobile people."² This claim can be made, first, on the basis that Scots have been migrants over a very long period of time. Tom Devine observes that: "From the thirteenth century to the present, Scots have been leaving their homeland in significant numbers."³ Secondly, by the 19th century, when it becomes possible to make comparisons, it appears that "Scotland had a higher rate of outward movement on a per capita basis of its population than virtually any other country of the time."⁴

Where have the Scots been going across all these years of migration? England, Poland, Scandinavia and Ireland were popular destination for Scottish migrants from the 13th century onwards. Over generations there developed what Brock has termed "a culture of emigration"⁵ which equipped Scotland to embrace the opportunities that presented themselves following the Treaty of Union with England in 1707. This gave Scotland greatly increased access to England's colonial empire. As Marjory Harper comments: "That constitutional change heralded a growing Scottish participation in transatlantic trade and settlement alike, so that by the end of the eighteenth century Scots had a significant, and sometimes dominant, influence in many of the American colonies."⁶ The extent of Scottish influence in the American colonies during the 18th century is

¹ G.T. Bisset-Smith, *Vital Registration: A Manual of the Law and Practice Concerning the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Registration Acts for Scotland (1907)*, p. 168; cit. Marjory Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles: The Great Scottish Exodus*, London: Profile Books, 2003, p. 1.

² Janette M. Brock, *The Mobile Scot: A Study of Emigration and Migration 1861-1911*, Edinburgh: John Donald, 1999, p. 232.

³ T.M. Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora 1750-2010*, London: Allen Lane, 2011, p. xiv.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

⁵ Janette M. Brock, *The Mobile Scot*, p. 38.

⁶ Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, p. 18.

indicated by the fact that there were thirty Scottish governors and lieutenant governors in the seven decades before the Revolution.⁷

Harper's analysis of the records reveals that, "Scotland sent 1,841,534 citizens to non-European destinations in the years 1825-1914.... Of the emigrants 44 per cent went to the United States, 28 per cent to Canada and 25 per cent to Australasia."⁸ So far as the USA is concerned, President Woodrow Wilson remarked that his country's history "was a line coloured with Scottish blood."⁹ Tom Devine points out that, "In 1940 ... 45% of the notables listed in *Who's Who in America* had either fathers or mothers bearing Scottish surnames."¹⁰ This bears out Andrew Carnegie's oft-quoted remark that, "America would have been a poor show but for the Scots".¹¹

In proportional terms, the influence of the Scots on Canada was even more marked. Stanford Reid went so far as to say that "the history of Canada is to a certain extent the history of the Scots in Canada."¹² As Jenni Calder observes:

The map of Canada is peppered with Scottish names. They have been given to rivers and mountains, towns and counties, bays and inlets. Canada's telephone directories are filled with them.... Formative aspects of Canada's history were dominated by Scots, in particular the Hudson's Bay Company which determined so much of the character of British North America, and the Canadian Pacific Railway which made the vital coast-to-coast connection. Scottish names are prominent in the government of Canada. There are nearly five million people of

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

⁹ George Shepperson, cit., Devine, *Ends of the Earth*, p. 135.

¹⁰ Devine, *Ends of the Earth*, p. 146.

¹¹ Quoted in R.A. Cage ed., *The Scots Abroad*, London: Croom Helm, 1985, p. 80, cit. John M. MacKenzie and T.M. Devine, "Introduction," in John M. Mackenzie and T.M. Devine ed., *Scotland and the British Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 10.

¹² W. Stanford Reid ed., *The Scottish Tradition in Canada*, Toronto, 1976, p. ix, cit. Devine, *Ends of the Earth*, p. 149.

Scottish descent in Canada, while Scotland's population is not a great deal more than that, and declining.¹³

By the mid-nineteenth century, Australia and New Zealand had also emerged as areas that attracted large-scale Scottish emigration. So far as the latter is concerned, this included the South Island province of Otago, centred on Dunedin, which was developed by the Free Church of Scotland as a Presbyterian colony from the 1840s. 80% of those arriving in the province between 1848 and 1860 were Scots-born and, unsurprisingly, the prevailing culture was unambiguously Scottish.¹⁴ Scots also formed a significant part of the European migration into many other parts of the southern hemisphere during the colonial era.

The Missionary Dimension of Migration

Scotland has long been famous for its missionaries. When the historic World Missionary Conference convened in Edinburgh in 1910, its organisers explained the venue by stating: "Edinburgh was a fitting place of meeting. In the earlier missionary enterprise which evangelised Europe no country was more prominent than Scotland, and no country has in proportion to its size contributed to the evangelisation of the world during the last century so large a number of distinguished and devoted missionaries."¹⁵ Many of the latter, such as Alexander Duff, Robert Moffat, David Livingstone, James Legge and Mary Slessor, have enjoyed a high profile. Less noticed has been the missionary impact of the great numbers of Scots who went overseas primarily as migrants.

Wherever they have gone, the Scots have taken their faith with them. Historically, they have been predominantly Presbyterian, with Roman Catholic, Episcopalian and other denominations forming significant minorities, and this has been reflected in the influence of the migrants. This can be seen from the 17th century in relation to Northern Ireland, where "successive waves of immigration of Presbyterian Scots was the main

¹³ Jenni Calder, *Scots in Canada*, Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2003, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴ See Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, pp. 108-109.

¹⁵ World Missionary Conference, 1910, *The History and Records of the Conference*, Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1910, p. 18.

cause of the Presbyterian community in Ireland which now numbers more than 300,000."¹⁶ It was also evident in England where Scots formed Presbyterian churches as well as exercising remarkable influence within the Church of England.¹⁷ As Scots became participant in the British Empire during the 18th century, it was observable that they carried with them the distinctive institutions of Scotland, including the church, which were undisturbed by the Union. As Tom Devine observes, "the export of integral parts of Scottish civil society to the Empire, such as education and Presbyterianism ... left a distinctive mark and elicited considerable contemporary comment from non-Scots."¹⁸

Although social and economic factors were the primary drivers of migration, there was also a faith dimension to it. Marjory Harper points out that "... by 1914 assisted emigration had been incorporated into a variety of charitable ventures which attempted, from both a national and regional perspective, to alleviate problems of overpopulation, unemployment and destitution. In the virtual absence of state welfare provision, churches and charities shouldered the burden of rescuing and rehabilitating needy men, women and children.... Undergirding the relief programmes of most of these charities was an evangelical Christian commitment to offer both practical and spiritual help to needy individuals..."¹⁹ Organisations like the Salvation Army and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) were leading agents in organising and supporting emigration from Scotland to the colonies. They enjoyed the support of the Presbyterian Churches which shared the sentiments voiced by the Free Church Monthly Record: "... how good a thing it is for outgoing young people to be welcomed in the colony by kindly churchmen and

¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Bauswein & Lukas Vischer ed., *The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations*, Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999, pp. 274-75.

¹⁷ David Stenhouse, *How the Scots Took Over London*, Edinburgh and London: Mainstream, 2005, pp. 95-112.

¹⁸ Devine, *Ends of the Earth*, p. 167.

¹⁹ Marjory Harper, *Emigration from Scotland between the Wars: Opportunity or Exile?* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998, p. 157.

women, ready to find them employment and to give them the guidance and supervision of Christian friendliness."²⁰

The experience of migration, for many, was framed in biblical and spiritual terms. In his account of the 300 Lewis people who embarked on the *Metagama* to sail to Canada in 1923, Jim Wilkie reveals how their experience was framed by their faith. On the Sunday prior to departure the text from which their minister preached was from Genesis 12:1: "And Jehovah said unto Abraham, get thou out of thy Country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto the land I will show thee." As they boarded the ship each of them was given a Gaelic Bible. Gaelic psalms were sung by the crowd on the pier, sermons were preached as they prepared for departure and a Gaelic prayer was offered on the deck of the ship as they set off.²¹ No wonder it was reported that, during the subsequent years, the Gaelic Free Church in Toronto was always full of Lewis people – "just like being in the island".²²

This was but a small part of a large movement in regard to Canada. As Bauswein and Vischer observe: "Among the settlers and fur-traders to come to this newly available land were many Scots. Presbyterian Scots and Scots-Irish would make up the bulk of most Presbyterian congregations until very recent years."²³ They also brought their faith to bear on the society to which they had come. Jenni Calder observes that "Scottish Calvinism remained a strong current in Canadian life," while Scottish Catholics also played a leading role in the growth of Catholicism in Canada.²⁴ By 1925 the Presbyterian Church was the largest Protestant body in Canada. When the United Church of Canada was formed in that year, two-thirds of the Presbyterians joined the new church while one-third remained in the Presbyterian Church. Both of these nationwide churches

²⁰ *The Monthly Record*, February 1927, p. 34; cit. Harper, *Emigration from Scotland*, p. 169.

²¹ Jim Wilkie, *Metagama: A Journey from Lewis to the New World*, Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001, pp. 64-69.

²² *Ibid.* pp. 153-54.

²³ Bauswein & Vischer, *The Reformed Family*, p. 107.

²⁴ Jenni Calder, *Scots in Canada*, Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2003, p. 116.

have a history rooted, to a significant degree, in the arrival of Scottish migrants in Canada in the 18th and 19th centuries.

As regards the USA, the settlement of Scottish immigrants in the mid-Atlantic coastal area of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland led to the first Presbytery being established in Philadelphia in 1706. The first General Assembly met in 1789, just as the USA was emerging as an independent nation. Today the Presbyterian community numbers around four million and has a nationwide presence.

Scots arriving in Australia from 1802 formed Presbyterian Churches that in due course would constitute around one-third of the Uniting Church in Australia when it was formed in 1977 as well as finding expression in the ongoing life of the Presbyterian Church of Australia which did not enter the union. Australians of Scottish Presbyterian stock numbered around half a million by the end of the 20th century.²⁵

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand traces its origins to a congregation founded by the Church of Scotland in Wellington in 1840 for settlers arriving from Glasgow. From the mid-19th century Free Church members also emigrated in growing numbers, settling particularly in Dunedin, and ministers were sent to care for them. By the end of the 20th century the Presbyterian community had grown to more than half a million people.²⁶

Countries where Presbyterian churches resulted from Scottish migration but remained small include Argentina, Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, Chile, Fiji, Guyana, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad. In Kenya, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe, Presbyterian churches that resulted from Scottish migration united with churches resulting from missionary work among the indigenous population. Congregations affiliated to the Church of Scotland were also formed in cities on the continent of Europe.

When the Pan-Presbyterian Council, forerunner together with the International Congregational Council, of today's World Communion of Reformed Churches, was formed in 1875 it was largely made up of Scottish

²⁵ Bauswein & Vischer, *The Reformed Family*, pp. 54-55.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Presbyterian Churches and churches which came into being as a result of the Scottish diaspora. When it met in Glasgow in 1896, for example, the vast majority of delegates came from the Scottish Presbyterian Churches, the Presbyterian Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in the USA, smaller Presbyterian Churches in the USA, the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.²⁷ Through migration, what had once been a localized national church had come to have significant presence worldwide. To this extent, it represents a significant missionary achievement.

The Distinctive Character of the Scottish Migrant Churches

Giving an address on the occasion of the centenary of the Church of Scotland Committee on Colonial Churches in 1933, John Buchan made the following observation about its work:

It has not been a missionary task in the strict sense, for it has not dealt with ignorance and savagery [*sic*]. Its business has been to provide the means of worship for our own people in distant lands, to preserve the continuity of the religious life of the most far-wandering race on the globe. But that is an aspect of our Lord's command which is as vital as normal missionary work. It is as much our duty to establish and confirm men and women in the faith as to bring new converts into it.

I would look upon the work done during the century as a debt due to our Scottish tradition and our national character. I have said that we are the most far-wandering people on the globe, but we are also eternally homesick. We carry with us our household gods wherever we go, and our strength lies in the fact that we can acclimatise ourselves in strange places and still keep the link with home.²⁸

As Scots emigrated to these new lands they reproduced the culture, architecture and institutions which were familiar from their homeland.²⁹ In

²⁷ *Pan-Presbyterian Council. Alliance of the Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System, Glasgow 17th to 26th June 1896*, Glasgow, 1896, pp. 40-49.

²⁸ John Buchan, *The Scottish Church and the Empire*, Edinburgh and Glasgow: Church of Scotland Committee on Colonial Churches, 1934, p. 3

²⁹ See Angela McCarthy ed., *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities since the Eighteenth Century*, London: I.B. Taurus, 2006; Tanja

Cairns Craig's terms, they were "Xeniteian migrants," who, "do not arrive in their new territories as victims dreaming of a return to the homeland but as architects who carry with them the plan by which they will rebuild the familiar structures of their homeland in a foreign place."³⁰ In this context, no symbol of Scottish identity was more highly valued than the church. As Marjory Harper remarks regarding Scottish institutions cherished by migrant communities: "Probably the most vital – and certainly the most familiar – was the Church. For innumerable Scots the cultivation of religious roots was the crucial way to maintain memories of the old country, and until the end of the nineteenth century founding or joining a Scottish church was probably the major mechanism through which Scots throughout the world acknowledged their origins and anchored themselves in a new community."³¹

The drive behind the establishment of Scottish churches was the desire of the migrants to worship in the pattern to which they were accustomed. An appeal for a Presbyterian minister sent by a group of early Scottish settlers in Cape Breton asked for "a pastor to take care of our souls we have none of our Way heir only of the church of ingland and We was never Brought up in that Way."³² Responding to such appeals, migrant churches cultivated Scottish identity as a fundamental part of their *raison d'être*. The Scots Kirk in Colombo, for example, proudly declared in 1920 that it was "a rallying-point for Scottish sentiment and tradition."³³

Buelmann, Andrew Hinson and Graeme Morton eds., *Ties of Bluid, Kin and Countrie: Scottish Associational Culture in the Diaspora*, Guelph: Centre for Scottish Studies, University of Guelph, 2009.

³⁰ Cairns Craig, "Empire of Intellect: The Scottish Enlightenment and Scotland's Intellectual Migrants," in Mackenzie and Devine, *Scotland and the British Empire*, p. 92.

³¹ Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, p. 337.

³² Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG 1, vol. 326, no. 171; cit. Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, p. 344.

³³ *Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland, with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, Colonial Committee Report, 1920*; cit. Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles*, p. 356.

The distinctiveness at which they aimed was to be as similar as possible to the church life that the migrants remembered from their upbringing in Scotland. As Alex King, Secretary of the Church of Scotland Colonial and Continental Committee, observed in 1938: "Where our people congregate furth of Scotland, sentiment about all things Scottish becomes stronger. The very man who was lightly attached to his Church in Scotland frequently discovers in himself new enthusiasm for it in Africa, India or South America. Out there he knows he needs it and feels it is just what he needs; no other form of Christian worship and fellowship can find him and hold him like that which is specially hallowed for him by its associations with 'Home'." ³⁴

Migration and Mission: Intersection and Divergence

The developments in industry, transport and communications which allowed aspiring Scottish migrants to set their sights on other continents also ushered in the modern missionary movement – the intentional effort by the churches of Europe and North America to take the gospel of Christ to parts of the world where it was unknown. Scotland, as noted above, played a disproportionately prominent role in this movement. In certain respects, the migrants and the missionaries had much in common. They went to make their life in a new context while maintaining a strong sense of Scottish identity. Often they used the same systems of transport and communication. During the 19th century they were usually people of faith, concerned to see churches planted and growing in the new lands to which they went. They differed, however, in one important respect: while church-planting was the primary purpose of the missionary, for the migrant it was a by-product of an enterprise which was primarily economic in its inspiration.

The contrasting character of the two movements came into view most clearly at points where they intersected. These were relatively few. The great majority of Scottish migrants settled in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – not areas that were principal destinations for the missionaries. The great majority of Scottish missionaries went to India,

³⁴ Alex King, *No Secret Society: An Account of Colonial Mission*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Colonial and Continental Committee, 1938, p. 1.

China and tropical Africa – not areas where there were many Scottish settlers. An exception to the rule was found in East Africa where, in Kenya and Malawi (Nyasaland), there were both significant numbers of Scottish settlers and influential Scottish missionaries engaged with the indigenous people.

Malawi, recently described by the Scottish Government as a "sister country," bears particular scrutiny.³⁵ It had been "discovered" by David Livingstone and the great explorer's death in 1873 prompted a movement in Scotland to fulfil in Malawi his vision of a centre of "Christianity, commerce and civilisation" which would effectively counter the slave trade in Africa.³⁶ It became a Scottish "mission field" while at the same time attracting Scottish settlers who came to work as planters or to develop the infrastructure of what became, in 1891, a British colony.³⁷

The settlers came mainly to the south of the country where the Church of Scotland's Blantyre Mission, under the inspired leadership of first Duff Macdonald and then David Clement Scott, during the 1870s and 1880s had made deep and far-reaching connections with the Mang'anja, Yao and Ngoni communities around them. Scott, in particular, was an eloquent exponent of the "translation principle" of Christian mission.³⁸ He was a gifted philologist, as evidenced by his monumental Mang'anja Dictionary.³⁹ His commitment to vernacular languages indicated his confidence in indigenous culture to be the base from which a truly African Christian church would be built. He expressed his philosophy of mission in these terms:

³⁵ Press Release, Scottish Government, 14 May 2012.

³⁶ See, e.g., Andrew C. Ross, *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire*, London & New York: Hambledon & London, 2002.

³⁷ See John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, London: James Currey, 2012, pp. 38-99.

³⁸ See further Kenneth R. Ross, *Gospel Ferment in Malawi: Theological Essays*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1995, pp. 107-125. (Reprinted Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018).

³⁹ D.C. Scott, *A Cyclopaedic Dictionary of the Mang'anja Language*, Edinburgh: Foreign Missions Committee of the Church of Scotland, 1892.

We must beware of woodenness in our development of African Life. To attempt to force on Africa the details of Church life and organisation at home is we believe fatal to true growth. African life must be met in its own way, and it will grow on its own lines. No one who understands the problem before him would dream for a moment of employing the same evangelistic methods in this country as one would do at home. Neither can we expect that native church life will move in the grooves cut out for it elsewhere. We have said it again and again, and we repeat ad nauseam that the African has got his own gift of Life and Work to present to the Church Catholic.⁴⁰

It is not difficult to see how such a vision would conflict with the characteristic concern of a migrant Scottish community to replicate, so far as possible, the pattern of church life which was familiar from the homeland. Scott charted an entirely different direction:

It is intended to make the Native Service, when we can get into our new Church, the regular diet of morning worship. Mang'anja is well enough understood almost for everyone to join intelligently in the worship, and the prayers are sufficiently dignified and comprehensive to afford utterance of what is common to all, European or native: the fervency of such an act as this will, we are persuaded, do more than anything else to breathe upon this land the Holy Ghost.⁴¹

Scott was very clear that he was working against any separation of the "migrant" and the "missionary" movements when it came to church life:

We are working here for the unity of the Church European and African. It has been the aim of the Mission during all those past years to bring and keep together the two parts of the Church – native and foreign. It would be a great blow to the Church of Christ should there arise in the future such a severance as we confess exists in the Colony [South Africa] between the native and European portions of it. Both portions will greatly increase as time goes on. We long to see them increasing together – not side by side but as one.... In God's great wisdom the native may be saved without us, but we doubt if we here can be saved without the native.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, September 1895.

⁴¹ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, March 1889.

⁴² *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, December 1891.

On the basis of this vision, Scott strongly resisted any attempts to provide a chaplaincy for the Scots who were arriving in Malawi in increasing numbers by the early 1890s. He invited them instead to join in the missionary adventure on which he had embarked. They could be part of the African church now beginning to emerge and, intentionally, running on quite different lines from anything known in Scotland. This, however, was to run directly counter to the instincts of the immigrant Scots who looked to the church to provide a familiar environment and a rallying-point for themselves as exiles.

The Scottish settlers were dissatisfied with Scott's approach on a number of counts. They did not share his hostility to Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company which they regarded as an ally but which Scott viewed as a threat to the interests of the indigenous population. They were suspicious of the high level of responsibility that he entrusted to African leaders of the emerging church movement since their operations were dependent on African labour that might be "spoiled" by the aspirations being cultivated by Scott. A further point of divergence concerned the nature of the church. Criticism was levelled at the allegedly "ritualistic" worship promoted by Scott, which to the arriving Scots did not appear sufficiently Presbyterian. Furthermore, as Andrew Ross, remarks: "Scott's refusal to provide a chaplaincy service for whites clearly rankled, as did his insistence on communion, whether celebrated in English or Nyanja, being open to both races."⁴³

So outraged were the Scottish settlers by Scott's policies that they sent a series of complaints to the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee. Such was the volume of complaint that, in January 1897, a Commission of Enquiry was established, to be chaired by Sir Charles Dalrymple MP and to report to the General Assembly.⁴⁴ The outcome of the Enquiry was, as summarised in an editorial in *The Scotsman* newspaper: "The verdict ... as respects Dr D.C. Scott and [his close colleague] Mr Hether-

⁴³ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, p. 161.

⁴⁴ "East Africa Mission: Report of Commission of Enquiry into Complaints Against the Mission," *Reports to the General Assembly, 1897*, Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1897, pp. 148-177.

wick might be summed up as 'Not Guilty; but don't do it again.' Each head of complaint was set aside as unproved, yet it was followed by a reproof or censure in each case."⁴⁵ For Scott, who had lost his wife the previous year and whose own health was weak at this time, it was the last straw. He resigned for health reasons, his hopes for the Blantyre Mission having apparently been frustrated.

Alexander Hetherwick, who had been mentored by Scott and shared much of his philosophy of mission, succeeded as Head of Blantyre Mission. Following the Commission of Enquiry, however, it was made clear by the Foreign Mission Committee that the church was to be regulated along the lines of Scottish Presbyterianism. The freedom to draw on African inspiration, of which Scott had dreamed, was no more. The Mission was pushed in the direction of providing what the Scottish settlers had been calling for: the familiar pattern of Scottish church life transplanted on to African soil.

Still Hetherwick held on tenaciously to the ideal of the oneness of the church, writing in 1904: "I want to see ONE church in Central Africa. I have fought for this in Blantyre here – latterly it has become more difficult with the greater variety of European elements in the country."⁴⁶ In practice, however, by this time there were two congregations in Blantyre, one European, the other "native". A European Kirk Session was established which met and functioned separately from the African one. As his biographer concludes: "Dr Hetherwick's hope for the unity in Blantyre of the religious life had not been realised. Theoretically the European and the native congregations were one, with a single session, but in practice they formed two self-contained bodies and held separate communions."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *The Scotsman*, editorial, 25 March 1897.

⁴⁶ Alexander Hetherwick to Robert Laws, 9 August 1904, Hetherwick Files, Malawi National Archives; cit. Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, p. 176.

⁴⁷ W.P. Livingstone, *A Prince of Missionaries*, London: James Clarke, n.d. [1931], pp. 177-78.

After the First World War, Hetherwick bowed to what now appeared to be the inevitable and began negotiations with the Committee in Edinburgh for the creation of a colonial congregation with its own minister in Blantyre. As Andrew Ross explains: "This was to be a totally separate body because the other Presbyterian Christians of the area were members of the Blantyre Presbytery of the CCAP [Church of Central Africa Presbyterian]. This was an acknowledgement of the total defeat in the area of racial unity in the Church, which had been fundamental to the thinking of D.C. Scott and to Hetherwick himself."⁴⁸ It was only with the political changes signalling the approaching end of colonial rule in the 1950s that these European congregations were reintegrated into the CCAP. The fact that they had to be separate for so long demonstrates the extent to which the two models of church planting were incompatible and at odds.

Faith with Scottish Roots: A River with Two Springs

The Presbyterian churches worldwide owe much to people who left the shores of Scotland, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries. The range and scale of Presbyterianism bears witness to the missionary impact of this movement. On closer examination it becomes apparent that it was, in fact, two movements very different in character, though closely related and intertwined at points. The churches established by migrant Scots in their new contexts such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, aimed to replicate as closely as possible the church life with which they had been familiar through their upbringing in Scotland. By contrast, the missionary movement was deliberately aiming to operate on the terms set by the receptor community to which they had gone with the intention of introducing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The large churches that in due course emerged in such contexts as India, China, Korea, Nigeria, Kenya and Malawi, were founded on this basis.

To a great extent, the two movements, though sharing a common Scottish origin, took effect in different geographical areas. There were, however, some points, such as Malawi, at which they intersected. Here their

⁴⁸ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, p. 191.

contrasting approached to church-planting came explosively to the surface. Confidence in the vernacular world of the community receiving the gospel set the missionaries at odds with arriving Scots who wanted the church to be as similar as possible to what they had known at home.

Both with churches arising from migration and those resulting from the missionary movement, the Church of Scotland since the mid-20th century has pursued a policy of indigenization whereby full responsibility for the life of the church has been handed over to local leadership. It still operates a small number of congregations that originated in the migrant movement, mainly in cities on the continent of Europe. Today these congregations pride themselves on their international composition, with Scots invariably in a minority. They nonetheless follow the "migrant" principle of replicating so far as possible the familiar Scottish pattern of church life and worship. Though fostering cordial relations with the local churches in their setting, they make no attempt to allow the language and culture of the local community to shape their understanding and expression of the gospel.

As we ask today about the implications of large-scale migration for Christian mission, perhaps the lesson from the Scottish experience is that the widespread dispersion of an ethnic group holding to the Christian faith does not necessarily lead to cross-cultural missionary engagement in their new contexts. Through assimilation and inter-marriage, the faith that it holds may come, over time, to touch others. Its primary drive, however, is to sustain the migrants in their faith through providing a church life as familiar as possible to them, which therefore has limited possibility to cross ethnic boundaries. This stands in sharp contrast to missionary engagement that is intentional in entering a new ethnic and cultural context and fostering the emergence of a church life which is very different from what the missionaries experienced in their homeland.

The difference between the church life arising from Scottish migration and that arising from intentional missionary effort is underlined by the fact that, until the early 1960s, the "Colonial" and "Foreign Mission" Committees of the Church of Scotland were entirely separate. Even after their integration in 1963 to form a single Overseas Council with responsi-

bility for all the international work of the Church,⁴⁹ in practice a structure of sub-committees allowed the different cultures and expectations of the two movements to continue. This remained the case during my own tenure as General Secretary of the Board of World Mission, successor body to the Overseas Council, from 1998 to 2009. Even after more than forty years of organisational integration, the contrasting character of work based on Scottish migration and work based on intentional missionary engagement was plain to see.

It would be simplistic to conclude, from this brief review of the "Scots Abroad," that migration and mission are two entirely different things. The migratory movement had a missionary dimension as Presbyterian churches were established in new locations. While these began as outposts of Scottish church life, through assimilation and inter-marriage across generations they gradually came to belong primarily in their new context, communities of faith open to all. The Scottish missionary movement, no matter how profound its engagement with indigenous culture, was inevitably stamped with much of the character of the homeland. It was a principal task of the first generations of local leaders to indigenize the church life that had begun under the inspiration of the Scottish missionaries. Nonetheless, whatever qualifications might have to be made, it remains clear from the Scottish case that the settlement of migrants and the practice of cross-cultural mission were, to a great extent, separate matters. For the most part they occurred in different places and, when they coincided, they tended to clash. Their principles of operation were diametrically opposed.

⁴⁹ See David H.S. Lyon, *In Pursuit of a Vision*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1998, pp. 190-92.

16. Understanding Mission: Two Centuries of Scottish Experience

The purpose of this chapter is to ask what were the characteristics that distinguished the Scottish missionary movement? In a small book published just over one hundred years ago,¹ David S. Cairns, Professor of Systematic Theology at the United Free Church of Scotland College in Aberdeen and Chairman of the influential Commission IV on "The Missionary Message in relation to Non-Christian Religions" at the Edinburgh 1910 Conference, argued that there are three features which distinguish the Scottish contribution to the modern missionary movement. This chapter will offer reflection on the three features identified by Cairns a hundred years ago but also suggest three more that might be considered.

Social Vision

The first feature discerned by Cairns was the extent to which Scottish missionary engagement was driven by a vision of social transformation. Without compromising the place of personal conversion and church growth in Christian mission, the Scottish endeavour was inspired by a vision of "... a legislative and economic order of Society which shall be in accordance with the mind of Christ."² "All down through Scottish history," as Cairns read it, "has gone this theocratic inspiration which it derived from Geneva." This Calvinist legacy, sometimes described as the "Godly Commonwealth," has nurtured a communitarian vision in Scotland that continues to distinguish its political life. Surveying the early years of the Scottish Parliament, restored in 1999, Graham Blount comments that: "a legacy of 'cultural Presbyterianism', in the form of a com-

¹ David S. Cairns, *The Vocation of Scotland in View of her Religious Heritage*, London: SCM, 1911.

² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

mitment to social justice, is at the heart of the parliament's and perhaps the nation's agenda."³

When Scots, inspired by faith, applied themselves to missionary engagement in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, it is perhaps little surprise that social justice was high on their agenda. The leading Africanist John McCracken has highlighted the social vision that guided the work of a succession of leading Scottish missionaries across the 19th and 20th centuries.⁴ (2014) No wonder that Thabo Mbeki, when he addressed the Scottish Parliament as President of South Africa in June 2001, devoted so much of his speech to paying tribute to what the Scottish missionary contribution had meant for the resistance of racism and the advance of social justice in southern Africa.⁵

The approach of Scottish missionaries in southern Africa was influenced by that of their compatriots in India who held out against any tendency to concentrate exclusively on individual conversion in favour of a strategy that aimed to influence the entire community, indeed the entire nation, over an extended period of time. The passion for this big social vision was perhaps never better expressed than in the, ultimately unsuccessful, attempts of the aged William Miller to lobby the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference in favour of an approach to mission that aimed at the "Christianisation" of the entire community. A vision of the kingdom of God coming to expression in the life of the community runs as a continuous thread through the story of Scottish missionary engagement around the world.

³ Graham K. Blount, "A New Voice in a New Land?" in William Storrar and Peter Donald eds., *God in Society: Doing Social Theology in Scotland Today*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2004.

⁴ John McCracken, "Andrew Ross and the Radical Strand in Scotland's Missionary Tradition," in Kenneth R. Ross ed., *Roots and Fruits: Retrieving Scotland's Missionary Story*. Oxford: Regnum, 2014, pp. 84-90.

⁵ *Scotland: A Global Connection Strategy*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, 2001, p. 5.

Ecclesial Commitment

The second strong feature discerned by David Cairns was the prominence of the church in Scottish missionary thinking. As he wrote, employing the military metaphor which was popular at the time: "I praise God for the great free lances of the Spirit, whom he has given to the world all down through history, to widen its thinking and to ennoble its aspirations, but the conquest of the world for Christ will never be made by the free lances but by the regular army, the Church which Christ founded and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail."⁶ It can be argued that Cairns rather underestimated the role of the "free lances" in the missionary enterprise. Indeed, a case can be made that the most important advances in the missionary movement were made by Faith Missions, only loosely connected with formal church structures. Even when the connection *was* there, forthright missionaries were often uncomfortably related to the church bodies to which they were responsible.

Nonetheless, compared with the situation in many other countries where missionary societies were separate from the regular life of the church, in the Scottish Presbyterian churches a sustained effort was made to integrate overseas mission work into the mainstream life of the church. At the time of "Edinburgh 1910," it was observed that the enthusiasm for the conference indicated how much public support for foreign missions had grown. The Convener of the United Free Church Foreign Mission Committee was quoted as having declared that: "the missionary temperature was rising at home. People were now receiving missionaries with a measure of intelligent welcome and friendly confidence, and with a desire to help."⁷ At the same time, press coverage of the conference claimed a foremost place for the Scottish movement. According to *The Scotsman* the choice of Edinburgh as the location for the 1910 World Missionary Conference might reflect the fact that "in that great enterprise Scotland has always led the way".

⁶ David S. Cairns, *The Vocation of Scotland in View of her Religious Heritage*, London: SCM, 1911, pp. 28-29.

⁷ *The Scotsman*, 3 June 1910.

Its grounding in the life of the church played a considerable part in this. As Dugald Mackichan observed:

If it be true, as has sometimes been said, that in proportion to their membership and their resources the Scottish Churches have a larger place in the missionary world than most other churches, with the exception of the Moravian Church, this is to be attributed not to superiority in spirituality and devotion to their Lord, but largely to the place which they have been led to give to Missions in the scheme of Church life and to the facilities which their ecclesiastical organization has provided for the realisation of their ideal. Once its Foreign Mission had secured this place *within* the Church of Scotland there was ready to hand the organization which was needed for enlisting the aid of its members in the near and remote parts of the land.⁸

It has to be acknowledged that this was an ideal that was never completely fulfilled. The sobering judgement of Andrew F. Walls has met with wry recognition from those with worldwide mission closest to their hearts: "While the Scottish perception of missions has sometimes (not always) been a high one, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the missionary project, whether forwarded by the abundance of the rich or the tithes of the poor, was always a peripheral one, always on the edge of the home church's vision, always the direct concern of the few."⁹ However, even if the ideal was often frustrated by the inability or unwillingness of the home church to take the missionary project into its core self-understanding, those who served overseas as missionaries had a very strong church consciousness. It can fairly be said that a distinguishing feature of Scottish missionaries is that they "took the church seriously, both the Church which sent them and, where they found one, that into which they became integrated".¹⁰

⁸ Dugald Mackichan, *The Missionary Ideal in the Scottish Churches*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927, p. 101.

⁹ Andrew F. Walls, "Missions," in Nigel M. de S. Cameron ed., *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993, pp. 567-94 [573].

¹⁰ Kenneth R. Ross and James L. Wilkie, "Edinburgh 1910 and Scottish Experience of Serving in Mission 1950 to 2000," *Missionalia*, Vol. 38/1 (2010), pp. 54-68 [68].

Intellectual Quality

The third distinguishing feature identified by Cairns was that "Scotland has always loved strong thinking in religion and she loves it still."¹¹ Few nations have had such a passionate commitment to the development of education, at all levels, over such a long period of time as is the case with Scotland. When this was translated into the missionary enterprise, it resulted in intellectual formation being given a central place. Alexander Duff in Calcutta, John Wilson in Bombay and William Miller at Madras were outstanding leaders in this field. Institutions such as Lovedale in South Africa's Eastern Cape, the Hope Waddell Institution at Calabar in Nigeria and the Overtoun Institution at Livingstonia in northern Malawi were responsible for the intellectual formation of the future leaders of these nations – something often acknowledged with gratitude.

Many of the missionaries who served were children of the Scottish Enlightenment just as much as of Scottish traditions of faith. This meant that they took an intellectual approach to their task. James Legge in China or J.N. Farquhar and A.G. Hogg in India were leading figures, on any reckoning, in opening up critical debate on the understanding of Christian faith required by the cultures and contexts in which it was taking root in Asia. For a broad intellectual engagement with the missionary movement as a whole, probably the outstanding figure in the 20th century was J.H. Oldham. At the beginning of the 21st century, no interpreter of the significance of the missionary movement has greater influence than Andrew F. Walls.

If Scotland made a disproportionate contribution to the worldwide missionary movement, it is probably in its intellectual dimension that this is most clearly apparent. In assessing the influence of its Scottish provenance on the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference it is notable that one of the most innovative features of the Conference was the engagement of leading theologians in its counsels and debates. Several of Scotland's leading theological thinkers were delegates: David Cairns, James Denney, H.A.A. Kennedy, A.R. MacEwen, W.P. Paterson and Alex-

¹¹ David S. Cairns, *The Vocation of Scotland in View of her Religious Heritage*, London: SCM, 1911, pp. 33-34.

ander Whyte. This served to connect the missionary enterprise with mainstream thinking and concern in church life – a significant development for a movement that had earlier been regarded as peripheral and even eccentric.

So far as the modern Western missionary movement is concerned, Edinburgh 1910 brought it into engagement with greater depth of theological analysis and more sophisticated intellectual discourse than anything that had gone before. In its 19th century history it had been, in the main, an activist movement, if not anti-intellectual then simply so occupied with the immediate demands of its activity that it had no scope for extensive reflection. The Reports of Edinburgh 1910's eight Commissions marked a new maturity in the missionary movement and set the bar by which subsequent international mission conferences would be measured. The role of Scots in the creation of the Commission Reports was entirely disproportionate to their numbers either as a nation or as participants in the missionary movement. The Scottish provenance of the 1910 World Missionary Conference therefore lent it a depth of intellectual grounding and a sophistication of theological analysis that marked it out as a distinctive and ground-breaking event. This intellectual quality is one of the threads that ran through Scottish involvement in the worldwide missionary movement.

Extensive Engagement

Despite a certain inclination to concentrate resources with a view to maximizing impact, the sheer scale of the Scottish missionary enterprise at its height ensured that it was very extensive in its range. When the three major Presbyterian churches in Scotland were re-united as the Church of Scotland in 1929, the Church magazine commented on the work of the Foreign Mission Department that its work, "dazzles one by its magnitude. Scarcely possible is it for an ordinary mind to keep track of it all."¹² India still loomed large at that time with significant centres in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Nagpur and Sialkot as well as among the Santal people of Bihar and the tribal areas of the Himalayan region in the north-

¹² Elizabeth A.C. Walls, *Pages of Life*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of World Mission and Unity, 1987, p. 21.

east. China was another major focus with the influential missions in Manchuria and Ichang. A major involvement in Jamaica continued and this had led to important pioneering missions in West Africa - Nigeria and Ghana in particular. South Africa was another major field and from this base missions had been developed at strategic points in east/central Africa, particularly Malawi, Zambia and Kenya. All of these areas of involvement yielded missionary leaders who stood in the front rank of the Western missionary movement.

Time forbids us to look further to remember the work of such revered pioneers as John G. Paton to whose work the origin of the church in Vanuatu (New Hebrides) may be traced, David Torrance whose work at Tiberias established a Scottish connection with the Holy Land which would be cherished for generations to come, William and Isabella Carslaw whose 37 years at Dhour El Choueir did much to lay the foundations of the Reformed Church in Lebanon, John Ross who not only completed influential work in Manchuria but also undertook the first translation of the New Testament into Korean, Robert and Sarah Kalley whose work was seminal for the emergence of Presbyterianism in Brazil, Diego Thomson and John A. Mackay with their immense influence on the development of education in South America. Nor can we do more than mention George Turner of Samoa, John Mackenzie and Alfred Merriweather of Botswana, James Chalmers of Papua New Guinea, Alexander Mackay of Uganda, John Hogg of Egypt, James Gilmour of Mongolia, James Legge the great sinologist who finished his career at Oxford, or Eric Liddell the Olympic athlete - each a missionary of enormous significance in their chosen sphere.

An even greater scale of omission comes into view when consideration is given to Scots who have participated in Roman Catholic missionary work. The structure of international missionary orders through which much of the Roman Catholic missionary endeavour is channelled makes it harder to trace the outline of a specifically national effort. Nonetheless this certainly exists and there is a hidden but important history that largely remains to be written. Likewise, missionaries from minority churches like the Christian Brethren have often been unjustly overlooked. Dan Crawford, for example, was so well known during his service in Africa that he once received a letter addressed simply to "Dan Crawford, Central Afri-

ca". Many such missionaries received their formation at the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow (now the International Christian College), which produced a succession of pioneering leaders for first-generation churches in China, Indonesia and Thailand as well as Australia and New Zealand. Should the time come when the totality of Scottish participation in the modern missionary movement is fully appreciated, its sheer extent will be one of the most striking features.

Taking the Long View

A perennial debate in regard to missionary strategy concerns the level of priority to be attached to short-term gains which are relatively easily attainable as opposed to working for results which will be apparent only in the longer term but which might have higher and more enduring quality. The default Scottish position in any such debate is to look to having impact that will be demonstrated in the longer term. Andrew Walls has demonstrated the extent to which early Scottish engagement in overseas mission was influenced by the experience of evangelism in the Gaelic-speaking Highlands.¹³ This was an enterprise pursued with energy from 1709 by the Society in Scotland for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Its strategy had a strong educational basis and it opened 229 schools in the Highlands and Islands in the course of the 18th century. Along with this initiative went evangelical preaching and the translation of the Bible and other key Christian texts into Gaelic. The result was a revival movement in the Highlands during the 19th century that had far-reaching effects. This experience conditioned mission-minded Scots to be prepared for a long period of sowing before looking for the time of harvest.

Dugald Mackichen observed that: "There is a quality of mind to which Lord Bacon has given the name 'longanimity'. He finds it in those who are prepared to work towards a distant goal, the attainment of which is ultimate, not immediate. In facing the problem of the Christianization of India the Church of Christ may find room for the exercise of this mental

¹³ Andrew F. Walls, "1709-2009: Three Centuries of Scottish Missions," in Ross, *Roots and Fruits*, pp. 5-10.

quality."¹⁴ As the first large "mission field" with which Scottish missionaries were substantially engaged, India cast a long shadow across the entire enterprise. This may help to explain the inclination to the long view that runs through the thinking of many Scottish missionaries. Andrew Walls offers the observation: "In the history of mission there have always been maximalists, whose vision of mission has encompassed the universe, and minimalists, who, having identified "one thing needful," single-mindedly pursue it. Each is necessary to the other. Scottish mission history furnishes examples of both groups; but it is hard to miss the presence in the record of many significant maximalists."¹⁵

National Identity and Global Outlook

The final strand to be considered is the balance struck between a strong sense of national identity, on the one hand, and a highly global outlook on the other. The establishment of the SSPCK in 1709, which may be taken as marking the beginning of the Scottish missionary movement, came just two years after the Union of the Scottish and English Parliaments in 1707. During three hundred years when Scottish identity was very much at stake, the missionary movement proved to be one outlet through which it could be expressed. To quite a considerable extent, the missionary movement fostered a source of national pride in Scotland and played its part in the construction of Scottish identity.

On the other hand, it is in the nature of the missionary movement that it is anything but parochial. One outcome of the missionary movement was the strongly ecumenical vision that took root in Scotland. Scotland has both been influenced by the ecumenical movement and has contributed to it, with J.H. Oldham, Robert Mackie and Lesslie Newbigin among many who have taken a leading role. More than is usually recognized the missionary movement proved to be a seedbed of the internationalism which marks Scottish society today. It apparently had a capacity both express Scottish identity and to foster an internationalist outlook. John McCracken has observed that Scottish missionaries in Africa "combined a sensitiv-

¹⁴ Dugald Mackichan, *The Missionary Ideal in the Scottish Churches*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927, p. 167.

¹⁵ Andrew Walls, "1709-2009: Three Centuries of Scottish Missions," pp. 32-33.

ity to global events and intellectual influences with a profound sense of Scottishness".¹⁶

The Surprise Factor

Despite what its aficionados might hope, the reality is that the Scottish missionary movement was rather a fringe affair. To those outside the church constituency it was a source of puzzlement or embarrassment, the more so in the more recent age of post-colonial guilt. Even within the churches that provided its support base, it was often a marginal band of enthusiasts who kept the flag flying for the missionary movement. Most leaders and members were preoccupied with local concerns. Little did they dream of the outcome which has been sketched by Andrew Walls:

Few in ecclesiastical leadership had the remotest idea that the so often struggling movement was to be instrumental in the transformation of the demographic and cultural composition of the Christian church. A movement that arose in the heart of Christendom helped Christianity to survive the death of Christendom. A project that was soaked in the Enlightenment helped produce a Christianity whose strength now lies in its independence from the Enlightenment. An expression of Christianity that arose from interaction with deep currents of European culture helped to foster a Christianity that will depend for its future on its critical interaction with the ancient cultures of Africa and Asia.¹⁷

In this extraordinary transformation the Scottish missionary movement played no small part. Were its contribution to be characterised, among its leading features would be social vision, ecclesial commitment, intellectual quality, extensive engagement, an inclination to the long view, and a balance struck between national identity and global outlook. Insofar as these characteristics help to explain the impact it has had, they merit consideration by all who take responsibility for the ongoing development of Christian mission. As new movements of mission find their shape and direction, the Scottish experience worldwide across two centuries may have some value as a point of reference.

¹⁶ John McCracken, "Andrew Ross and the Radical Strand," p. 84.

¹⁷ Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process*, p. 235.

Christian Renewal in Africa

17. *Together Towards Life* and Contemporary African Theology

It is well-known that Africa has been the scene of dramatic growth of Christianity, with the number of professing Christians increasing from an estimated 11,663,000 to 494,668,000 between 1910 and 2010.¹ As a result, the continent has become an important theatre for exploration of the meaning of Christian faith. This exploration has been undertaken principally at local level and in African languages. In recent decades the results of this engagement with the faith have found expression also in more formal theological work. Three main trends can be discerned in contemporary African theology: inculturation, liberation and reconstruction.² This essay will consider the 2012 World Council of Churches mission affirmation *Together Towards Life* (TTL) using the lens provided by these three leading trends. First, however, there is a more fundamental matter to consider.

The World of Spirit

Of great importance to communities right across the African continent is the world of spirit. Besides the physical world that is perceptible to our senses, Africans have been alert to the unseen world of the spirit as an equally valid sphere in shaping human life and destiny. In fact, the spirit world is considered the ultimate source of power. It has therefore been a source of perplexity to many that the new faith of Christianity, as introduced by Western missionaries, seemed to have little connection with the spiritual dimension of life. They have found it compelling and convincing in many ways but there has been a mismatch at the spiritual lev-

¹ Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross (eds.), *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. 112.

² See further Francis Anekwe Oborji, 'Theology', in Kenneth R. Ross, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and Todd M. Johnson (eds.), *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa: Edinburgh Companions to Global Christianity Vol. 1*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, pp. 352-63; see further Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Trends in African Theology since Vatican II: A Missiological Orientation*, 2nd ed., Rome: Leberit Press, 2005.

el, explained by Andrew Walls in these terms: "Western theology is in general too small for Africa; it has been cut down to fit the small-scale universe demanded by the Enlightenment, which set and jealously guarded a frontier between the empirical world and the world of spirit. Much of humanity lives in a larger, more populated universe, in which the frontier is continually being crossed. It is a universe that comprehends what Paul calls the principalities and powers. Such is the background of the majority of the world's Christians, and it requires a theology that brings Christ to bear on every part of that universe."³ In pursuit of such a theology, Africans have created their own spiritual movements – whether by forming African Independent ('spirit') churches, joining the Pentecostal movement that is a dynamic force in today's Africa, or renewing the life and worship of their mission-founded churches so as to give them a more spiritual quality.

It is therefore music to the ears of African Christians to find the mission affirmation *Together Towards Life* (TTL) acknowledging the world of spirit that has always been of great importance to them: "The early Christians, like many today, experienced a world of many spirits. The New Testament witnesses to diverse spirits, including evil spirits, 'ministering spirits' (i.e. angels, Heb. 1:14), 'principalities' and 'powers' (Eph. 6:12), the beast (Rev. 13:1-7), and other powers—both good and evil. The apostle Paul also testifies to some spiritual struggle (Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 10:4-6) and other apostolic writings contain injunctions to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8)."⁴ More than in any previous ecumenical statement of the meaning of mission, TTL is a Holy Spirit document. Its confidence in the Holy Spirit leads it to engage spiritual reality with confidence: "One of the gifts of the Spirit is discernment of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10). We discern the Spirit of God wherever life in its fullness is affirmed and in all its dimensions, including liberation of the oppressed, healing and reconciliation of broken communities, and the restoration of creation. We also discern evil spirits wherever forces of death and destruction of life pre-

³ Andrew F. Walls, 'Commission One: "Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World"', in Kerr and Ross, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, pp. 27-40 [38].

⁴ TTL, §25.

vail."⁵ Thinking of Christian mission in these terms puts it on a wavelength that will have wide reach in Africa.

The call to engage the spiritual level is foundational to TTL. Its introduction includes the following statement that strikes a chord in Africa: "Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives the deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming and caring for life. This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through the spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God's grace."⁶ Such an orientation goes a long way towards answering the African cry for a more spiritual expression of the faith. We turn our attention now to another major concern of African theology to ascertain whether or not it is met by the affirmations of TTL.

Inculturation of the Gospel

The first generation of African theologians, whose work was being published from the 1970s, were greatly preoccupied with countering the widely-held view that Christianity was a Western religion imposed upon Africa. As Desmond Tutu wrote: "[The missionaries] have consciously or unconsciously sought to Europeanise us before they could Christianize us. They have consequently jeopardised the entire Christian enterprise since Christianity has failed to be rooted sufficiently deeply in the African soil, since they have tended to make us feel somewhat uneasy about what we could not alter even if we had tried until doomsday – our Africanness."⁷ TTL strikes a chord with African sensibilities when it admits that: "The connection of evangelism with colonial powers in the history of mission has led to the presupposition that Western forms of Christianity are the standards by which others' adherence to the gospel

⁵ TTL, §24.

⁶ TTL, §3.

⁷ Desmond M.B. Tutu, "Some African Insights and the Old Testament," in Hans-Jürgen Becken (ed.), *Relevant Theology for Africa*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing House, 1973, pp. 40-46 [41].

should be judged."⁸ It issues a ringing call to the churches to take an entirely different direction:

The Spirit inspires human cultures and creativity, so it is part of our mission to acknowledge, respect, and cooperate with life-giving wisdoms in every culture and context. We regret that mission activity linked with colonization has often denigrated cultures and failed to recognize the wisdom of local people. Local wisdom and culture which are life-affirming are gifts from God's Spirit. We lift up testimonies of peoples whose traditions have been scorned and mocked by theologians and scientists, yet whose wisdom offers us the vital and sometimes new orientation that can connect us again with the life of the Spirit in creation, which helps us to consider the ways in which God is revealed in creation.⁹

African theologians who have struggled long and hard to express Christian faith in terms of African culture will surely feel vindicated by this Spirit-centred affirmation of indigenous wisdom and culture offered by TTL.

In fact, they have already advanced a long way down the path proposed by TTL. As Kwame Bediako has observed: "The main thrust of African Christian scholarship has been the argument that 'conversion' to Christianity must be coupled with cultural continuity. In its specific application to Africa, the argument has meant that against all odds, space had to be made for a positive pre-Christian religious heritage in the African Christian consciousness on the grounds that 'religion informs the African's life in its totality'."¹⁰ In order to open up such space, African theologians set out to express Christian faith in terms of African culture. This led them into a sustained dialogue with African Traditional Religion. This was something that had been implicit in the engagement of African communities with the Christian message but was now articulated through the work of scholars like John Mbiti and Bolaji Idowu.¹¹ Mbiti called on Afri-

⁸ TTL, §98.

⁹ TTL, §27.

¹⁰ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, Maryknoll: Orbis & Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995, p. 77.

¹¹ See E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, London: Longmans, 1962; E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, Maryknoll, Orbis:

can Christians to express in theological terms the leading role they now occupied in world Christianity, the goal being to bring to expression an African Christianity that is both fully African and fully Christian.

The central question in this enterprise was expressed by Congolese theologian Bénézet Bujo in these terms: "In which way can Jesus Christ be an African among the Africans according to their own religious experience?"¹² The attempt to answer this question has involved understanding Christ in terms of categories familiar within African culture such as liberator, ancestor, first born son, master of initiation, healer, king, chief, mediator, saviour, redeemer with power. Particularly potent has been the idea of Christ as ancestor, which seems to have suggested itself independently to numerous African theologians in different parts of the continent. It has been expounded in great depth by Bujo himself, by John Pobee of Ghana¹³ and by Charles Nyamiti of Tanzania in his seminal work: *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*.¹⁴ These theologians found it meaningful to speak of Jesus as Ancestor par excellence, for in him are fulfilled all the qualities and virtues that the Africans ascribe to their ancestors. In other words, the historical Jesus fulfils the highest ideals ascribed to the ancestors in African thought – he heals, he cures, he raises the dead, and so on. In short, he imparts life force in all its fullness. This love and power he bequeaths, after death, to his disciples. It is precisely in his death and resurrection, with its soteriological meaning that Jesus transcends the ancestors. Considering the meaning of faith in Christ in terms of the cherishing of ancestors found throughout Africa is one way in which theologians such as Bujo, Pobee and Nyamiti have sought to root Christian faith in African reality.

1974; John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann, 1969; John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, London: Heinemann, 1975.

¹² Bénézet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992, p. 75.

¹³ John S. Pobee, *Towards an African Theology*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979.

¹⁴ Charles Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*, Eldoret, Kenya: Gaba Publications, 1984.

In its section on 'Evangelism and Cultures' TTL calls for an approach that is deeply rooted in the kind of inculturation that has been championed by African theologians: "The gospel takes root in different contexts through engagement with specific cultural, political, and religious realities. Respect for people and their cultural and symbolic life-worlds are necessary if the gospel is to take root in those different realities. In this way it must begin with engagement and dialogue with the wider context in order to discern how Christ is already present and where God's Spirit is already at work."¹⁵ This is a mandate which has already been taken up and fulfilled with remarkable results, though the enterprise is still in its first generation and ripe for further development. African theologians are already actively mining their cultural heritage so as to be able to contribute fully to the expression of Christian faith envisaged by TTL: "We cannot capture the complexities of the scriptures through one dominant cultural perspective. A plurality of cultures is a gift of the Spirit to deepen our understanding of our faith and one another."¹⁶

African theologians, in turn, may bring to the wider oecumene the kind of challenge expressed in the words of John Mbiti: "there cannot be theological conversation or dialogue between North and South, East and West, until we can embrace each other's concerns and stretch to each other's horizons. Theologians from the southern continents believe that they know about most of the constantly changing concerns of older Christendom. They would also like their counterparts from the older Christendom to come to know about their concerns of human survival."¹⁷ The time is ripe for a pilgrimage of true theological reciprocity and mutuality. The steps in this direction taken by TTL will be welcomed within African Christianity as something long overdue.

¹⁵ TTL, §97.

¹⁶ TTL, §100.

¹⁷ John S. Mbiti, "Theological Impotence and Universality of the Church," in Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (eds.), *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies*, New York: Paulist and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976, pp. 6-18 [17].

The Cry for Liberation

Deep in the soul of African Christians lies the yearning for their faith to be rooted in their culture. The quest for inculturation remains fundamental. Yet there is another cry to which African theologians have felt obliged to respond. There are urgent social, political and economic questions to be addressed. A theology of inculturation, on its own, may not be enough. As Desmond Tutu has written: "I fear that African theology has failed to produce a sufficiently sharp cutting edge. It has indeed performed a good job by addressing the split in the African soul, and yet it has by and large failed to speak meaningfully in face of a plethora of contemporary problems that assail the modern African. It has seemed to advocate disengagement from the hectic business of life, because very little has been offered that is pertinent, say, about the theology of power in the face of the epidemic of coups and military rule, about development, about poverty and disease and other equally urgent present-day issues."¹⁸ The need to address the multi-faceted crisis in which Africa has been embroiled in its recent history has concentrated the mind of many African theologians.

Perhaps the most representative is Jean-Marc Éla who has sought to articulate theology out of his pastoral experience with the Kirdi people of Tokombèrè village in northern Cameroon and turn it into a theological paradigm. For Éla, the shock which the local church might have experienced through its pastoral experience was the realization that even though a greater part of Africa is a deeply and massively Christian region, "it tends to remain a veritable empire of hunger."¹⁹ He asks the question: how could the local church co-exist with such a situation without "shocking" it with the gospel? In his writings, Éla captures various angles of this "shock" as he describes the frustration, the apparently meaningless existence, the extreme and paralyzing poverty, the violation of basic human rights, the colonial and neo-colonial violence, the multinational exploitation, as well as hunger experienced by the people. It is this "rough

¹⁸ Desmond Tutu, "Black Theology/African Theology: Soul Mates or Antagonists?," in James S. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: A Documentary History Vol. I 1966-79*, 2nd ed., Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993, pp. 385-92 [386].

¹⁹ Jean-Marc Éla, *My Faith as an African*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988, p. 87.

ground" that, according to Éla, provides the unique context and challenge for Christianity and theology in Africa today: "our practice of Christian faith faces a major challenge from African men and women who agonize over where their next meal is coming from."²⁰

Éla has no hesitation in facing up to these harsh realities now presenting themselves in post-colonial Africa: "The battles for independence gave birth in the hearts of so many Africans to hope for a new world. But after more than twenty years of experience with democracy African style, independence has turned out to be a sham and a decoy. For many, the situation is worse than it was before. Black persecutes, tortures, murders black..."²¹ While he is by no means unsympathetic to inculturation theology, his analysis leads him to be critical of an African theology that seems to assume that African society and churches "can achieve their identity by considering only anthropological and cultural problems."²² In his view, such pre-occupation with cultural identity could be a dangerous alibi, employed so as to ignore the more burning issues in contemporary Africa. What is needed instead, according to Éla, is an inculturation which is relevant to the culture that is being born out of daily struggles of Africans for survival.

The daily social and political realities that shape African life form the context in which theology requires to be done. "In our environment," Éla contends, "our faith does not ask questions about the sex of angels or the infallibility of the pope; instead we question the lack of any genuine application of the critical function inherent in Christian faith. How can we show that the African church is blocked by an ecclesiastical praxis that is, in fact, a kind of museum of narrow moralism, a ritualistic sacramentalism, a disembodied spirituality, and a withering dogmatics?"²³ Éla himself attempts to give a lead in awakening the critical function inherent in Christian faith: "We have been permanently reduced, it seems, to a situation where poverty and oppression surround a few islands of affluence. A multitude of the oppressed are up against an elite that always tends to

²⁰ Jean-Marc Éla, *My Faith as an African*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988, p. 87.

²¹ Jean-Marc Éla, *African Cry*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986, p. 46.

²² Jean-Marc Éla, *My Faith as an African*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988, p. 118.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

reinforce its position of power by setting up a system whose results are clear."²⁴ Éla is not afraid to identify the forces which operate to create such a situation: "Almost everywhere throughout the black continent, the various forms of coercive apparatus of the multinationals guarantee optimal conditions for the over-exploitation of human labour and natural resources."²⁵

The "cry" articulated by Éla and others finds an emphatic answer in TTL. While it grounds Christian mission, more fundamentally than ever before, in spirituality, it is clear that what it seeks to promote is a *transformative spirituality*²⁶ – one that is fully engaged with the kind of realities with which Éla is concerned. "Mission spirituality," argues TTL, "motivates us to serve God's economy of life, not mammon, to share life at God's table rather than satisfy individual greed, to pursue change toward a better world while challenging the self-interest of the powerful who desire to maintain the status quo."²⁷ It quotes from an earlier WCC document to ground its commitment to transformation and justice: "Our faithfulness to God and God's free gift of life compels us to confront idolatrous assumptions, unjust systems, politics of domination and exploitation in our current world economic order. Economics and economic justice are always matters of faith as they touch the very core of God's will for creation."²⁸

TTL is perhaps at its most trenchant when addressing the injustice inherent in the prevailing economic system of globalization: "The policy of unlimited growth through the domination of the global free market is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature."²⁹ In offering a prophetic critique of the currently prevailing system of economic globalization, TTL quotes from the 2004 "Accra Confession" of the World Alliance

²⁴ Jean-Marc Éla, *My Faith as an African*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988, pp. 89-90.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

²⁶ TTL, §29.

²⁷ TTL, §30.

²⁸ *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE): A Background Document*, Geneva: WCC, 2005, p. 13; cit. TTL, §30.

²⁹ TTL, §31.

of Reformed Churches: "It makes the false promise that it can save the world through creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry."³⁰ An answer to Jean-Marc Éla's "African cry" can be found when TTL strikes a confrontational note: "This is a global system of mammon that protects the unlimited growth of wealth of only the rich and powerful through endless exploitation. This tower of greed is threatening the whole household of God. The reign of God is in direct opposition to the empire of mammon."³¹

The need to counter systems of injustice and bring liberation to the oppressed has perhaps had no clearer articulation on the African continent than it has in the Black Theology of South Africa.³² In a highly polarised situation where power, wealth and privilege were concentrated on one side and poverty, oppression and suffering on the other, proponents of Black Theology like Mokgethi Motlhabi, Allan Boesak and Manas Buthelezi took up the biblical theme that God takes sides with the oppressed, just as God did when the people of Israel were being oppressed in Egypt. In the perspective of Black Theology, the social location of the theologian is critical to the formation of a proper understanding of God. When the church has moved to the centre of society and is identified with the rich, the powerful and the dominant, then it becomes so much bound up with their interests that it finds it impossible to come to terms with the God of the Bible. It is only those who look from the margins, from the vantage point of poverty and suffering who are in a position to understand the God who revealed himself to the poor and suffering, as indicated in the biblical record. For its own integrity theology must move out to the margins of society and see things with the eyes of the poor.

³⁰ World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *The Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice: in the Economy and the Earth* (2004), §10; cit. TTL, §31.

³¹ TTL, §31.

³² See Mokgethi Motlhabi, "Black Theology: a Personal View," in Basil Moore (ed.), *Black Theology: the South African Voice*, London: C. Hurst & Co., 1973; Allan A. Boesak, *Black Theology Black Power*, London: Mowbray, 1978; Allan A. Boesak, *Black and Reformed*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984; Manas Buthelezi, "African Theology and Black Theology," in Becken, *Relevant Theology for Africa*, pp. 18-24.

Advocates of Black Theology will surely feel that their point has been taken when they find that 'mission from the margins' is one of the most distinctive and provocative emphases of TTL: "Mission from the margins recognizes that being in the centre means having access to systems that lead to one's rights, freedom, and individuality being affirmed and respected; living in the margins means exclusion from justice and dignity. Living on the margins, however, can provide its own lessons. People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view."³³ One of the core convictions of TTL is that it is precisely from the margins that authentic Christian mission can be undertaken. It works from the basis that: "Jesus Christ relates to and embraces those who are most marginalized in society, in order to confront and transform all that denies life. This includes cultures and systems which generate and sustain massive poverty, discrimination, and dehumanization, and which exploit or destroy people and the earth. Mission from the margins calls for an understanding of the complexities of power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities."³⁴ The understanding that mission needs to be undertaken from the margins is one that connects with both African Theology and Black Theology.

Time for Reconstruction

Just as African theology of inculturation was criticised for its lack of attention to the social, political and economic dimensions of life, so the corrective efforts of theologians like Jean-Marc Éla have been subject to criticism for offering a liberation theology that begins and ends only in lamentations without showing a way of "getting out of the jungle". It is perhaps significant that Allan Boesak titled the final chapter of his book on Black Theology, "Beyond the Sorrow Songs".³⁵ A sense that there was need for a more constructive theology was the inspiration of a conference called by the All Africa Conference of Churches in Mombasa in 1991. The Cold War had ended, the apartheid system in South Africa was finally crumbling and soon there would be talk of an African Renaissance.

³³ TTL, §38.

³⁴ TTL, §37.

³⁵ Allan A. Boesak, *Black Theology*, pp. 123-52.

There was need for a theology that would engage these new realities. The response to this challenge generated by the Mombasa conference was styled a theology of reconstruction, with Kenyan theologian Jesse Mugambi as its chief architect.³⁶ This new theological direction was not an abrupt departure since it continued to emphasise the themes of inculturation and liberation but it did bring a new awareness of the responsibility of theologians to contribute, in a positive way, to the transformation of society.

This was a call to which theologians in different parts of the continent were ready to respond. Notable work was done, for example, by Charles Villa-Vicencio in South Africa, Kā Mana of the DRC and Valentin Dedji of Cameroon.³⁷ In the view of these theologians of reconstruction, both inculturation and liberation responded to a situation of ecclesiastical and colonial bondage that no longer obtains. In place of the inculturation – liberation paradigm, which they saw as ‘reactive’ they sought to install a ‘proactive’ theology of reconstruction. Instead of being preoccupied with the ascendancy of liberation over inculturation or vice versa – a matter which is still of great debate, advocates of theology of reconstruction call for an innovative transcendence of both. It is theology addressed to the public domain, seeking to bring a vision of Christ crucified and risen to bear on the challenges of creating new social, political and economic structures in Africa.

The African theology or reconstruction will find its concerns are voiced also in TTL. The new WCC mission statement is inspired by a lofty theological vision but equally aware that this vision needs to be brought to expression in concrete terms in our contemporary societies:

³⁶ See Jesse N.K. Mugambi *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology after the Cold War*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995; Jesse N.K. Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction*, Nairobi: Acton, 2003.

³⁷ Charles Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; Kā Mana, *L’Afrique va-t-elle mourir: Bousculer l’imaginaire Africain. Essai d’éthique politique*, Paris: Cerf, 1991, Valentin Dedji, *Reconstruction and Renewal in African Theology*, Nairobi: Acton, 2003.

'The affirmation of God's mission (*missio Dei*) points to the belief in God as One who acts in history and in creation, in concrete realities of time and contexts, who seeks the fullness of life for the whole earth through justice, peace, and reconciliation. Participation in God's ongoing work of liberation and reconciliation by the Holy Spirit, therefore, includes discerning and unmasking the demons that exploit and enslave. For example, this involves deconstructing patriarchal ideologies, upholding the right to self-determination for Indigenous peoples, and challenging the social embeddedness of racism and casteism.'³⁸

A significant contribution to the theology of reconstruction has been made by African women theologians, such as Mercy Oduyoye, Musimbi Kanyoro and Isabel Phiri, who have sharply questioned the hierarchical and discriminatory patterns that have prevailed both in church and society.³⁹ Their critique finds an echo in TTL with its insistence that: "Participation in God's mission follows the way of Jesus, who came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45); who tears down the mighty and powerful and exalts the lowly (Luke 1:46-55); and whose love is characterized by mutuality, reciprocity, and interdependence. It therefore requires a commitment to struggle against and resist the powers that obstruct the fullness of life that God wills for all, and a willingness to work with all people involved in movements and initiatives committed to the causes of justice, dignity, and life."⁴⁰

Another contribution of African women theologians has been to promote a collaborative, collective, rather than individualist, approach to the task of theology. This concern is also evident in the theology of reconstruction with reference being made to the conversational and communicative styles in African cultures, which are recently captured in the writings of some African scholars with the word, *palaver*. Drawing on strong African traditions of resolving issues through community discussion, theologians like Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator have advocated a more conversational

³⁸ TTL, §43.

³⁹ See Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro (eds.), *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*, Maryknoll: 1992; Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995; Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1997.

⁴⁰ TTL, §45.

and communicative mode of doing theology.⁴¹ This sense of inter-relation and reciprocity, which draws on currents that run deep in African life, chimes well with the TTL affirmation that: "The good news of God's reign is about the promise of the actualization of a just and inclusive world. Inclusivity fosters just relationships in the community of humanity and creation, with mutual acknowledgement of persons and creation and mutual respect and sustenance of each one's sacred worth."⁴² It is also notable that one quarter of TTL is devoted to "Spirit of Community: Church on the Move" – the communal expression of Christian faith.⁴³

Conclusion

Space does not allow for the exploration of other features of TTL that resonate with contemporary African theology, such as the need to relate mission to the flourishing of creation,⁴⁴ the call to confident but sensitive evangelism,⁴⁵ or the importance of dialogue with people of other faiths as a 'mutual encounter of commitments'.⁴⁶ However, by noting the spiritual key in which TTL is set and tracing its relevance to the leading concerns of African theologians – inculturation, liberation, and reconstruction – it is already apparent that this is a mission affirmation that has embraced major issues facing Christianity in Africa today. There are good reasons to believe that it will prove to be a highly relevant text for consideration of mission questions in Africa; and to be confident that its emphases will be broadened and deepened as they are explored in the African context.

⁴¹ See Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011; Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *Theological Re-imagination: Conversations on Church, Religion, and Society in Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines, 2014.

⁴² *TTL*, §46.

⁴³ *TTL*, §55-79.

⁴⁴ *TTL*, §19-23.

⁴⁵ *TTL*, §80-88.

⁴⁶ *TTL*, §89-96.

18. Christianity, Decolonization and African Nationalism: the Case of Malawi

The Advent of Christianity and Colonial Rule in Malawi

In 1859 an event occurred which was probably the most decisive in the making of the Malawi nation as we know it today. David Livingstone stepped on to the soil of Malawi for the first time. From that moment Christianity, colonialism and African nationalism were all at play in an interaction that would shape Malawi's history. The territory into which Livingstone stepped was not at that time anything like a modern nation state. Various ethnic groups - some rooted in their ancestral home, others relative newcomers - jostled for position. All were vulnerable to the slave trade as those who fell into the hands of the slavers were transported across Lake Malawi and onward to the slave markets of Africa's east coast.

Into this situation of disturbance and conflict stepped David Livingstone, already a seasoned missionary with almost 20 years of African experience behind him. A Scot, of Highland stock, born and brought up in industrial Lanarkshire, he had enlisted as a young medical doctor with the London Missionary Society. During his early years in South Africa he imbibed the pro-African approach that had marked out the early LMS missionary John Philip as a target for the fury of European settlers who believed that the role of Africans was a subservient one. In the contest between white and black that was emerging in southern Africa, Livingstone could say: "I have never met an African who did not know whose side I am on."

By the time he set out on his Zambezi expedition in 1858 he knew what he was looking for: an area (1) free of the racist attitudes which prevailed further south, (2) where Europeans could live in good health and spread both Christianity and the commercial activity, particularly cotton production, which Livingstone was convinced would be the antidote to the slave trade, and (3) which could connect with the coast by navigable rivers. After some abortive efforts he finally sailed into a northward tributary of the Zambezi - the River Shire, which would lead him finally to Lake Malawi. Without that fateful journey of David Livingstone, colonial rule

would not have taken the shape that it did in Malawi; nor would a country exist today with the borders that define the Malawi nation. In this sense it is true to say that Livingstone was the forerunner of colonial rule, a role that has earned him considerable criticism in the post-colonial era. He did, in fact, use the term "colony" when he spoke of what he hoped to achieve in central Africa.

However, it needs to be made clear that what Livingstone had in mind was something very different from the white domination that would sweep southern Africa after his death. It is necessary to recognise that Livingstone's vision of a "colony" was of a settlement geared to trade and development that would interact on equal terms with the surrounding African communities. Lamin Sanneh, in his reassessment of the missionary enterprise *Translating the Message*, brings out the contrast when he compares Livingstone with his younger contemporary Cecil Rhodes: "Both dominated Central Africa: Rhodes left a legacy of white domination, Livingstone of rising African aspirations."¹ Whereas Rhodes was driven by the ambition to exploit Africa's abundant resources to the advantage of Britain, Livingstone worked to a different rhythm. He wanted to see African communities freed from the scourge of the slave trade and able to reach their full potential within the community of nations and the international trade system.

He was full of confidence in the integrity and strength of African life and culture, not least when it came to the reception of the Christian faith that was close to his heart. Lamin Sanneh notes Livingstone's admiration for the richness and subtlety of the Bantu languages and his determination that the Christian faith should be expressed in the vernacular. This confidence in the inherent capabilities of the vernacular environment, Sanneh suggests, "brought Livingstone into radical tension with his own European cultural roots."² He sometimes suggested that, for the appropriation of Christianity, African culture might prove to be a better basis than European. Notwithstanding his commitment to the spread of British political influence, he held to the principle that the Christian faith in Africa

¹ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: the Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989, p. 113.

² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

must be built on indigenous foundations. This tension in Livingstone's thought would only be resolved by subsequent history. As Sanneh writes: "an African Church, rooted in the vernacular, must inevitably come into conflict with a political system based on the superiority of foreign institutions."³ The success of the translation enterprise initiated by Livingstone would ensure that a vernacular Christianity would remain and flourish long after the days of European colonial rule had come to an end.

The complex figure of Livingstone introduced to Malawi in 1859 the forces of colonialism, Christianity and African nationalism that were to be closely interwoven in the 100 years that followed. Of course, this was not a one-way interaction. Livingstone had been shaped by his years in Africa and it was the way that Malawians responded to him and later missionaries that determined the flow of history. Yet there is no escaping the reality that Livingstone's arrival brought a decisive change.

His influence was reinforced by the fact that the missionaries who followed him were greatly influenced by his thinking. The short-lived Anglican mission at Magomero in southern Malawi did not survive long in the early 1860s but played its part in the encounter. Enduring influence came after Livingstone's death with the two Scottish Presbyterian missions named in his memory – Blantyre in the south and Livingstonia in the north. The Scottish missionaries threw themselves into the vernacular world of the African communities among whom they settled. At Livingstonia Robert Laws was a pioneer in mastering the Chinyanja language and organising the translation of the Bible into it. At Blantyre David Clement Scott's *Cyclopaedic Dictionary of the Mang'anja Language*, published in 1892, clearly demonstrated the extent to which these missionaries had made themselves at home in the vernacular.

Scott also moved quickly to develop African leadership and many of the early initiatives of the mission were spearheaded by Africans. So far as political power is concerned, until the late 1880s the Scottish missions made their own relationships with the surrounding African communities. At that point, however, the realistic options appeared to be a British Pro-

³ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, New York: Orbis, 1989, p. 106.

tectorate or Portuguese annexation. The missionaries sparked a vigorous, and finally successful, campaign for a British Protectorate. To that extent the Scottish missionaries were responsible for the advent of colonial rule. It should be noted, however, that the conditions under which protection was offered were a matter of much concern, especially to the Blantyre missionaries. In their view, what was required was protection from outside interference and minimum disruption of the internal affairs of the people of the territory.

In 1891 the British Protectorate was declared and welcomed by the chiefs of the area.⁴ There followed a period when Cecil Rhodes sought to extend his influence into Malawi but he was met at every turn by resistance from the Blantyre missionaries. Harry Johnston, the first Consul, saw very clearly that there were two incompatible visions at play. The translation of the Christian gospel into vernacular life could not but be subversive of the brand of colonialism that was represented by Rhodes. The early years of the British administration were marked by constant criticism from the Blantyre Mission in particular on such matters as land, labour and taxation as the Mission stood up for the rights of the African community. As opposed to the imposition of alien norms the missionaries advocated the possibility of using the "language, life, customs and history" of the African communities as the basis on which to govern. Even as they came to terms with colonial rule they were planting the seeds of African nationalism.

Christianity and Early Resistance to Colonial Rule

Prominent critics though they were, it should be noted that both the Blantyre and the Livingstonia Missions accepted British colonial rule and, as years went by, they adapted themselves to it to the extent that they came to share many of the assumptions on which colonial rule was based. There were, however, a small number of more radical missionaries who questioned its entire basis. In 1892 Joseph Booth, an English

⁴ The Protectorate was known as British Central Africa until 1907 when it was named Nyasaland, the name which prevailed until at independence in 1964 when the nation was called Malawi. For ease of reference the name Malawi is used throughout this chapter.

missionary, arrived in Malawi as a proponent of the self-supporting industrial mission, establishing the Zambezi Industrial Mission and the Nyassa Industrial Mission. Booth opposed colonial rule on principle and held out a vision of "Africa for the African" that led him, in a petition to Queen Victoria, to demand independence for Malawi by 1920.

Opposition to colonial rule was therefore begun almost as soon as it was established. Booth's radical ideas proved stimulating for some Malawians who were attracted by his message, such as Charles Domingo, Elliot Kanan Kamwana and John Chilembwe. They exercised ministries that were challenging to colonial rule in a variety of ways. It was John Chilembwe, however, who instigated the violent insurrection that went down as one of the most direct challenges to be faced by a British colonial administration in the early 20th century.

Chilembwe was a protégé of Joseph Booth who sponsored his training in the USA. He returned to Malawi in 1900 to lead the Providence Industrial Mission. Here he nurtured the vision of "Africa for the Africans" to a point where he reached the conclusion that armed revolt against British rule was necessary. The revolt, which took place in the war-time conditions of 1915, was short-lived. The rebels attacked and killed 3 European settlers before being routed by the forces of the British Administration. Chilembwe himself was shot and killed. Yet the Rising had a potent impact in stirring national consciousness. Many years later, in the 1990s, a photograph of Chilembwe was printed on Malawi's banknotes and Chilembwe Day – 15 January – was declared to be a public holiday. His short-lived revolt is recognised today as the beginning of Malawi's struggle for independence.

It did not escape the notice of the authorities that the Rising was based on a church and led by a Christian pastor. The impressive church building at Providence Industrial Mission was blown up by Administration forces to clearly give the message that this brand of Christianity would not be tolerated. Intense suspicion fell on all the Christian missions, particularly the Blantyre Mission of the Church of Scotland since it was discovered that no less than 84 of the rebels were baptized members of the Blantyre Mission. Did the education and formation that they received at the Mission render them more likely to revolt against British rule? Alexander Hetherwick, its senior missionary, appeared before a Commission of In-

quiry to deny that the Mission was implicated in the Rising and to defend the missionary educational policy to which many settlers were attributing its underlying cause. African ministers from Blantyre Mission also testified at the Commission of Inquiry. While distancing themselves from the Rising, they voiced clear dissatisfaction with certain aspects of European rule and demonstrated an independence of thought in which the seeds of nationalism could be detected.

Christianity and the Making of the Nationalist Movement

In the years between the wars, such independence found expression in two forms – the formation of Native Associations and the formation of independent churches. By this time the Livingstonia Mission in the north of the country was famous for the quality of education that it offered. The result was the creation of an educated elite – teachers, pastors and clerks – who had the potential to become a significant political influence. As early as 1907, Robert Laws, the leader of the Mission, had commented that "Some constitutional means should be provided whereby the natives who form the majority of the population should have by a native council or otherwise the means of expressing an opinion on legitimate changes which concern themselves."

Under the influence of this kind of thinking, the North Nyasa Native Association was formed in 1912, holding its meetings in a reading room that had been provided by the Livingstonia Mission. Efforts were made to form similar Associations throughout the area of the Mission's influence. After the First World War members of the Association, given confidence by the part they had played in fighting for freedom, demonstrated a new confidence. In the 1920s the Associations became more vocal, criticising both the Mission and the Government and speaking out for social justice. Yesaya Zerenje Mwasi, e.g., as Secretary of the West Nyasa Native Association, wrote on one occasion: "The man who is underpaid, underfed and badly housed, the man who is sweated and overdriven, the child

who is wronged in body and mind are not easily accessible to the message of God's grace."⁵

The Native Associations, as recognised pressure groups, did play a significant part in the emergence of African nationalism in Malawi. Their influence was limited by their local character, though in 1924 Levi Mumba expressed the hope that they might come together in a national body. They were also limited by their willingness to work within the status quo. Though they could be very vocal in drawing attention to social injustices, they never queried the legitimacy of colonial rule. Nonetheless they did create a politically alert associational life and there is clear continuity between the concerns that drove the Native Associations in the years following the First World War and those which were taken up in the drive for independence in the 1950s.

Another form of associational life that was influential in the inter-war period was that of the independent churches which emerged during these years. Particularly within the Livingstonia Mission, a number of African leaders clashed so strongly with the European leadership of the Mission that they ended up forming their own independent churches. Often these churches took a more sympathetic approach to traditional African culture and values than European missionaries were prepared to entertain. The Last Church of God and his Christ, founded in 1925, offered a strong defence of polygamy as a legitimate form of marriage. Other secessions revolved more around the issue of authority, such as the move by Yesaya Zerenje Mwasi in 1933 to form the Black Man's Church which is in Tongaland. His vision was of a church where the dignity of the African leadership would be fully respected and there would be no special authority for the European. Though the independent churches were not directly political, it is clear that the consciousness that they represented could quite easily be translated into a directly political form.

⁵ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 2nd ed. Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000, p. 317.

Christianity and the Struggle against the Federation

The struggle between the conflicting visions of Rhodes and Livingstone reached its denouement when, despite the practically unanimous opposition of the African population, the British Government agreed to the establishment of a Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This was based on a white-dominated Parliament in Salisbury, now Harare, and clearly aimed to permanently entrench white rule. To Malawians this was a great act of betrayal. They had believed that the Protectorate was what it claimed to be: a means of protecting the population of Nyasaland from hostile neighbours. Now they were being handed over to a racist regime based on the other side of the Zambezi. The slowly emerging nationalist movement was stung into action and began to plan much more vigorously for the attainment of independence. Another factor that made a difference at this point is that many Malawians had fought with the Kings African Rifles in the Second World War. This exposed them, e.g., to the efforts being made in India to attain independence and asked them the question why they should not be working towards independence in their own context? Some were involved in the victory of the KAR over the Italian colonists in Ethiopia – as Jonathan Sangaya, who became the first African General Secretary of Blantyre Synod, would put it – "an African army freeing an African country". These developments made independence much more thinkable than it had been before the Second World War. The Nyasaland African Congress was formed in 1944 and in the years after the War began to press with urgency for the process leading to self-government to be accelerated.

Developments in Malawi were paralleled by developments in Scotland. In the early 1950s when the establishment of the Federation was being considered it was apparent that opinion in Scotland was very different from in England. Through the closeness of Scottish missionaries to the Malawian people, Scots were alert to total opposition to Federation that prevailed in Malawi and they became its champions. Matters came to a head in 1953 when the Church of Scotland hosted a large meeting on the "Crisis in Central Africa" in the Assembly Hall and a "Petition from the People of Scotland" with 27,000 signatures was presented to the Queen asking that the plans to form a Central African Federation be reconsidered. All was to no avail – despite the unanimous opposition of the peo-

ple of Nyasaland and the strong support they received in Scotland, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland came into being in 1953.

When opposition to Federation reached its climax in 1958 and the British Governor declared a State of Emergency, it was leaders of the Church of Scotland who questioned the need for such draconian action. The Federation Government singled out the Church of Scotland as an instigator of the rising opposition in Nyasaland. In fact, Malawians did not need any instigating since they had been consistently and continuously opposed to the Federation since first it had been mooted. But the Federation Government was quite accurate in discerning the stance of the Church of Scotland. When the 1959 General Assembly convened, a major item of business was the State of Emergency in Nyasaland. When it came to debate it, there were three influential Cabinet ministers in the gallery. It has been said that this was the last time that the Church of Scotland, almost single-handedly, changed the mind of the British Government on a critical issue of the day. From this time on, British policy shifted in the direction of working swiftly towards independence for Malawi.

In Malawi too, the Church had been active, particularly the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian – the church which had emerged from the Blantyre, Livingstonia and Nkhoma Missions. Blantyre Synod produced a Statement that stated clearly its outright rejection of the Federation and support for the independence movement. This would come as a surprise to no one since the Congress that now embodied the movement for independence was dominated by people who were products of the Blantyre and Livingstonia Missions. Andrew Ross, a Scottish missionary who was working in Malawi at the time of the Federation recalled that: "The membership of the CCAP and of the African National Congress so overlapped that at times it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. My kirk session in Balaka parish overlapped 70 per cent with the local congress committee. The old Nyasaland ANC committees used to open a meeting with prayer and close with a benediction, because so often the clerk of the committee was the clerk of the local kirk session, and he just transferred his technique!"⁶

⁶ Cit. Billy Kay, *The Scottish World: A Journey into the Scottish Diaspora*, Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2006, p. 204.

The church in Malawi influenced events not only by words but also by actions. A striking event took place at Livingstonia during the State of Emergency. The British Administration sent a message indicating that an aeroplane would fly over Livingstonia on a certain day and the missionaries were to wave white sheets if they wished to be evacuated and preserved from the presumed dangers of living in the midst of an African population. In fact, when the small plane flew over the Mission, there were whitewashed bricks arranged so that they spelt Ephesians 2:14. On return to base they consulted the Bible and read the text: "For [Christ] himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility." That was the answer to whether or not the missionaries wished to be evacuated. Another influential action was the passing of authority in church life from European to African hands. This, Eric Jeffrey suggests, "... made real impact not only in church circles but throughout Malawi and beyond as the implications of what occurred sank in. The Church was demonstrating the wind of change not only to the authorities in Malawi but also to the British Government in Westminster. It made the movement towards independence and self-rule much smoother than it might have been."⁷ Once the mind of the British Government was made up, the movement towards self-government for Nyasaland proceeded smartly. The country was finally granted independence in July 1964.

Conclusion

The Malawi story challenges the commonly held view that Christianity was nothing but the religious dimension of Western colonialism. The 70-year colonial period reviewed in this chapter reveals that while the advent of Christianity and the imposition of colonial rule were closely intertwined, Christianity was also integral to the anti-colonial struggle. There was a consistent missionary vision that is marked by a sense of common humanity and fundamental commitment to the advancement of the African community. This was always bound to collide with the colonial project. It has to be admitted that there were times when missionaries lapsed from the ideal. When the Church of Scotland proposed to send Dr

⁷ Eric W.S. Jeffrey, "Roots and Fruits – Northern Malawi," paper presented to "Roots and Fruits" conference, Glasgow, 25 April 2009, p. 3.

Hastings Banda as a missionary doctor to Livingstonia in 1939, it was the European nurses at Livingstonia who objected and said that they could never agree to work under an African doctor. Around the same time, a missionary who was renowned for his ability to work in African languages, insisted that African minister who travelled with him in his lorry should sit in the open back of the lorry, not in the cab with himself. The racism of the times infected the missionaries also – something to which the emerging African leaders were acutely sensitive. So Christianity, or its official representatives, was often compromised with colonialism. Perhaps most tellingly, the missionaries were generally convinced of the superiority of Western culture and values, with the obvious inference that African culture and values were inferior. In this way they did contribute ideologically to the sustaining of a colonial regime. However, the history recounted in this chapter has shown that Christian faith was also affirmative of vernacular culture and key to the emergence of African nationalism and so was also a significant element in the movement that finally brought an end to colonial rule.

19. No One Can Shave your Head in your Absence: Malawi, Scotland and a Relational Approach to International Development

"No one can shave your head in your absence," states a Malawian proverb invoked by Matthews Chikaonda speaking in the chamber of the Scottish Parliament at the "Malawi After Gleneagles" conference in November 2005.¹ The meeting of the G8 at Gleneagles in Scotland in July 2005 is remembered for the great "Make Poverty History" march which saw some 250,000 people gather in Edinburgh to demand that the G8 take firm steps to counter the extreme poverty that is still the daily experience of too many of the world's citizens. One way of focussing this challenge in Scotland was to give renewed attention to the strong historical relationship that the nation enjoyed with Malawi, one of the world's poorest countries. Hence the conference hosted by the Scottish Parliament concentrated on the development challenges faced by Malawi and the role that the relationship between Scotland and Malawi might play in meeting them. Implicit, and sometimes explicit, in the conference was a sense that orthodox development theory was not proving to be very effective and that the challenge/opportunity for Scotland and Malawi was to draw on their shared history and mutual understanding to develop a new approach to international development.

When the United Nations Millennium Development Goals were reviewed in 2015, it was apparent that, while there are areas of substantial progress and achievement, there are countries where most of the goals remain stubbornly unfulfilled. In particular, in Sub-Saharan Africa on almost all indicators there is, according to the UN's own data, "progress insufficient to reach the target if prevailing trends persist".² When it comes to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing

¹ "Malawi After Gleneagles: A Commission for Africa Case Study," Report of the Scotland-Malawi Partnership Conference, November 2005, 104.

² www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/report-2013/2013_progress_english.pdf [10 August 2013].

child mortality, improving maternal health, and ensuring environmental sustainability, it is apparent that in Sub-Saharan Africa the MDGs were not met by the target year of 2015. On the contrary, a UN report found that: "Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region that saw the number of people living in extreme poverty rise steadily, from 290 million in 1990 to 414 million in 2010, accounting for more than a third of people worldwide who are destitute."³ Malawi lies at the heart of this region and represents a prime case of this disturbing trend.

The Integrated Household Survey conducted by Malawi's National Statistics Office during 2010-11 revealed that, "on average, a Malawian consumes about MK150 per day".⁴ This is equivalent to around 1 US dollar. In terms of basic necessities, 38.3 % of households complained that they had inadequate food, 40.5% that they had inadequate housing, 32.7% that they had inadequate healthcare and 55.6% that they had inadequate clothing.⁵ In terms of basic household furnishing and equipment, only 34.8% of households own a bed, only 32.2% own a table, only 38% own a chair, only 38.6% own a bicycle, only 11.4% own a clock and only 12.7% own an iron.⁶

32.5% of the population are categorised as being subject to "very low food security," where: "Households experience multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. They report reduction in food quality, variety, quantity and frequency of food consumed. Consumption by adults could have been restricted in order for small children to eat and could also depend on food assistance from relatives or friends."⁷ Regarding the nutritional status of children under five, 1.2% are severely underweight for their age and 30.6% are moderately under-

³ *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*. New York, United Nations, 2013, 7.

⁴ *Republic of Malawi Integrated Household Survey 2010-11: Household Socio-economic Characteristics Report*. Zomba: National Statistics Office, September 2012, 97.

⁵ *Household Socioeconomic Characteristics Report*, 141.

⁶ *Household Socioeconomic Characteristics Report*, 106.

⁷ *Household Socioeconomic Characteristics Report*, 187.

weight while 14.0% are severely stunted and 48.1% are moderately stunted.⁸ The probability of a child dying before reaching the age of 5 is currently 118 per 1,000 live births.⁹ Overall, 50.7% of the population is categorised as "poor" and 25% as "ultra-poor".¹⁰

To find such a situation prevailing in the early 21st century calls into question how much has been achieved by the conventional post-war understanding of international aid and international development. Serious questions have been raised about the methodology of making large grants or loans from Governments or international bodies to national Governments in order to achieve economic development in poor countries. The traditional paradigm of an endless transfer of aid has become discredited as donor countries face popular concern about the ineffectiveness and misuse of aid while the people of recipient countries often mirror these concerns as they perceive international aid as one pillar of a corrupt system that entrenches an elite and excludes the majority.

The call for a rethink is often expressed in terms of the need for "sustainable" models of development, commonly understood as meaning a short-term intervention from a development partner resulting in long-term impact as the programme continues to unfold through local ownership and commitment. Sustainability is often presented as the opposite of dependency – where the result of provision of aid is that its recipients become disempowered to the point where they are entirely reliant on a continuing flow of aid. Others see market forces as holding the key. Neoliberal critics look to the unleashing of entrepreneurial talent and the creation of a favourable environment for business as the most promising drivers of development. As the limitations of Government bureaucracies are exposed, others again look to non-governmental actors - civil society - as the base for effective development work. Another approach prioritises education in the belief that the more educated the population the better it will be equipped to achieve development.

⁸ *Household Socioeconomic Characteristics Report*, 183.

⁹ www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/general/GDDS/social.pdf [31 January 2014].

¹⁰ *Household Socioeconomic Characteristics Report*, 204.

While this debate has been raging, the people of the two small nations of Malawi and Scotland have evolved a development-oriented way of working together that puts a premium on the relational dimension. The strength of their shared history makes Malawi's development a matter of profound concern to people in both countries. This chapter will briefly trace that history, identify the main features of the approach to international development that has resulted from it, and evaluate the challenges ahead.

The Scotland and Malawi Story

The two nations have a long history of interaction going back to the first contact being made in 1859 by David Livingstone during his Zambezi expedition. Livingstone had established a strongly relational approach to his work in Africa and this shaped the thinking of those who were inspired to attempt to continue it.¹¹ Prominent among them were the Scots who established the Livingstonia and Blantyre Missions in what is now Malawi in the mid-1870s. The Missions were planned and named as initiatives that would bring to fruition Livingstone's dream of a central Africa freed from the slave trade, embracing Christian faith and prospering through legitimate commerce.¹² In their early years the Scottish Missions built up relations with local communities in a pre-colonial context. Only when faced by the twin threat of Portuguese annexation in the south and "Arab" slavers in the north, did they campaign successfully for the British Protectorate, which became a reality in 1891.¹³ No longer would Malawi be an exclusively Scottish concern but Scots continued to be disproportionately highly represented not only among the missionaries but also among the settlers and planters.

The Scottish Missions, Blantyre in particular, had a robustly critical relationship with the British colonial administration as it came into effect

¹¹ See Andrew C. Ross, *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire*, London & New York: Hambledon & London, 2002.

¹² John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, London: James Currey, 2012, pp. 38-50.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-57.

during the 1890s.¹⁴ On the crucial inter-linked issues of land, labour and taxation, the Blantyre missionaries consistently took the side of African communities as they faced the pressure of the colonial regime on these fronts. As a settler dominated economy and an accompanying racist ideology came to hold sway, the Missions stood for African advancement and for appreciation of the positive qualities of African life and culture. The primary instrument through which they worked was the vast network of schools that they developed. Through the schools they cultivated the values which implicitly challenged racism and colonialism, and educated the Malawians who in due course would form the nationalist movement which led the country to independence.

Though it must be acknowledged that the Scottish missionaries, particularly after the First World War, were by no means free from the prevailing racist assumptions of their day, nonetheless they entered into a sympathetic understanding of African life and community. Fluent in indigenous languages, they formed friendships that proved to be deep and enduring. From an early stage they also invited promising African leaders to spend time in Scotland, further cementing the distinctive connection between the two peoples.¹⁵

A growing number of families and communities, in both Nyasaland (as Malawi was known from 1907 to 1964) and Scotland, became aware of one another and of the particular history that united them. This came into focus when Nyasaland faced its political nemesis in 1953 when it was incorporated, against the clearly expressed wishes of almost its entire African population, into the racist Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The British Government took the view that this new arrangement would be economically beneficial and that the African population would eventually come to recognise its advantages. It was only in Scotland that there was significant resistance as the many personal connections brought it home to people how strong was the African resistance to the Federa-

¹⁴ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, pp. 105-42.

¹⁵ Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland: Together in the Talking Place since 1859*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013, pp. 95-135.

tion.¹⁶ When the nationalist movement revived over the next few years to defeat the Federation and pave the way for independence, Scots were prominent among its members and supporters, with one – Colin Cameron – becoming the only European to be appointed to the Cabinet when self-government was achieved.¹⁷

During the post-independence era, Malawi continued to have a special relationship with Scotland, grounded in the earlier history. It now moved, as seemed appropriate, into a lower key and might have been expected to become a receding historical memory. Around the time of the Millennium, however, it became apparent that something was stirring in Scotland-Malawi relations. Both nations had undergone significant political changes during the 1990s. Malawi had broken the stranglehold of its one-party dictatorship and embarked on the path of multi-party democracy. Scotland, after almost three hundred years without its own Parliament, achieved a devolution settlement that provided for the re-introduction of a Scottish Parliament with extensive, though limited, powers. New political energy, both in Scotland and Malawi, created the potential for fresh interaction between the two nations.

From the Spring of 2004, the Scotland Malawi Partnership took shape as a civil society alliance bringing together a wide variety of organisations concerned with Malawi. It aimed to increase collaboration and multiply best practice. Its stated objective is "to inspire people and organisations of Scotland to be involved with Malawi in an informed, coordinated and effective way so that both nations benefit."¹⁸ Simultaneously in Malawi a Committee was formed to build up the Malawi end of the renewed partnership. In July 2004 this Committee, together with their Scottish counterparts, met with the new President of Malawi, Bingu wa Mutharika, who announced his backing.

¹⁶ Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland: Together in the Talking Place since 1859*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013, pp. 136-55.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-74.

¹⁸ *Scotland Malawi Partnership Strategic Plan 2008-11*. Edinburgh: Scotland Malawi Partnership, 2008, p. 3.

November 2005 saw Mutharika in Scotland to sign an Inter-Governmental Cooperation Agreement between Malawi and Scotland. This built on the rising tide of civil society activism and project work that marked relations between Malawi and Scotland at this time. The Government to Government relationship drew its vitality and found its effectiveness from the multitude of links made by civil society – schools, universities, health boards, local government, community groups, faith-based organisations etc. It was here that the Scotland Malawi Partnership, as a civil society alliance, had a key role to play. With the full support of the Scottish Government, the Partnership seeks to forge a new form of inter-national relations. It has stated its identity and vision in these terms: "It pioneers a new approach to North-South relations, one built on friendship and respect between two nations built up over generations of close collaboration. It works today on the basis of mobilising a network of Scottish-based commitment to Malawi in order to develop best practice and maximise impact, ensuring that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts."¹⁹ This vision has brought together an alliance which is ground-breaking in the range and diversity which it brings to the quest for a vibrant civil society-based approach to the development of the relationship.

This successful creation of a coordinating body on the Scottish side called for an equivalent organising agency on the Malawi side. This came into effect in mid-2012 when the Malawi Scotland Partnership, the Malawi-registered and Malawi-run counterpart to the SMP in Scotland, established an office in Lilongwe, supported by grant funding from the Scottish Government.²⁰ This fresh round of Malawi-Scotland interaction has been consciously inspired by what went before. A sense of affinity, mutuality and affection drives a determination to counter poverty in Malawi. In the process it is evolving an approach to development that is marked by some original features. It is well placed to fulfil the need identified by Ben Ramalingam for the role of "aid" in development and humanitarian

¹⁹ Peter A. West & Kenneth R. Ross, "Foreword," *Scotland Malawi Partnership Strategic Plan 2008-11*. Edinburgh: Scotland Malawi Partnership, 2008, p. 2.

²⁰ Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland: Together in the Talking Place since 1859*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013,, pp. 197-211.

assistance to "shift from 'external push' – filling gaps in a predictable and linear fashion – to 'internal catalyst'. Catalytic aid would not create development but it would identify, expand and sustain the space for change."²¹ Current interaction between Malawi and Scotland demonstrates a number of features that suggest it can fulfil this kind of catalytic role.

Distinctive Features of Malawi-Scotland Engagement

Priority of the Relational

First and foremost, it promotes a people-to-people model of development, rooted in the shared history between the two nations. It focuses on active relationships between people to foster a shared understanding of the development challenges facing Malawi and to support the creation of practical, sustainable solutions. It is through their sense of kinship and their shared human experience that the people of Scotland and Malawi aim to effect real and lasting change, both through their own activity and by influencing the policies and actions of governments and institutions. The distinctive genius of this approach is its grounding in the friendship—both individual and institutional—which has built up between the two nations over the past 150 years. As the long-serving Scottish missionary Cullen Young once expressed it: "The cry in Africa ... is for the feel of human relationships and comradely activities at all costs, even if great schemes for political or educational or economic amelioration seem to be pushed into an inferior place."²² This perspective was echoed at a seminar on Scotland-Malawi relations held at Chancellor College, University of Malawi, in January 2014 when participants pled for an approach to development which not only addresses material considerations but also answers the cry for human dignity.²³ The relational character of Scotland-

²¹ Ben Ramalingam, *Aid on the Edge of Chaos: Rethinking International Cooperation in a Complex World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 361.

²² T. Cullen Young, *African Ways and Wisdom: A Contribution Towards Understanding*. London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1937, p. 40.

²³ "No One Can Shave Your Head in Your Absence: Malawi and Scotland Together for Development". Public Seminar, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 10 January 2014.

Malawi undertakings provides a capacity to reach this level. Though the language of friendship and "auld alliance" is often used by politicians and diplomats to characterise the relationship of two countries, it is rare that this is so deeply grounded in the genuine affection and practical activism of ordinary citizens.

The Scotland Malawi Partnership and the Malawi Scotland Partnership, as civil society alliances, do not seek to operate as large, centrally funded aid operations. Rather, they both function by uniting the great variety of organisations and individuals that operate bilaterally between the two nations. By offering a coordinating function they counter the fragmentation that has been identified as an endemic weakness of the international aid system.²⁴ The members of the Partnership add value to their often modest budgets by the strength of the relationships which they enjoy and the depth of mutual understanding which they have built up. Benefits flow in both directions, and a cumulative effect is built up, allowing good experiences to inspire further initiatives.

Mobilisation of civil society

Through this initiative, ordinary people and local communities are mobilised to offer their time, energy, resources, experience and expertise to Scotland and Malawi's shared effort. This is not to usurp the role of development professionals but it is to place their work in the context of strong popular ownership and involvement. It draws on democratic and communitarian traditions both in Scotland and Malawi to move away from hierarchical and top-down approaches in favour of working from below.

The scale of civil society involvement is remarkable. Using a form of the Social Return on Investment framework, Lawrence Dritsas of Edinburgh University prepared a report in late 2010 in which he estimated the numbers of people involved and the total financial value of their work. Dritsas concluded that:

²⁴ Ben Ramalingam, *Aid on the Edge of Chaos: Rethinking International Cooperation in a Complex World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 3-5.

- The value of inputs of money, time and in-kind donations made by the membership of the SMP to Scotland's links with Malawi is at least £30 million over the twelve months previous to October 2010.
- At least 1.3 million Malawians and 280,000 Scots have benefitted from these activities over the same period.
- Approximately 148,000 Malawians and 85,000 Scots were actively involved in delivering these activities.²⁵

On the basis of these findings Dritsas concluded that "... there is a very great deal of money, material, time and goodwill invested in the links between Scotland and Malawi. [£30 million] is an impressive figure and, in conjunction with our findings that over one million Malawians and thousands of Scots are involved in or benefitting from these activities, easily demonstrates that the links between Scotland and Malawi are extremely valuable to both countries."²⁶

As membership-based charitable companies, working from a very modest resource base, the Scotland Malawi Partnership and Malawi Scotland Partnership act as catalysts for an ever expanding and maturing engagement between the people of the two nations. It is comprehensive and multi-sectoral, promoting mutually beneficial interaction that ranges from national Parliaments in capital cities to primary schools in remote areas. This gives it a capacity to address such pressing issues as healthcare or climate change by drawing on a very wide range of perspectives and contributions. It captures the contribution of highly specialised professionals, often unavailable to traditional development practice through NGOs. This vision has brought together an alliance which is ground-breaking in the range and diversity which it brings to the quest for a vibrant civil society-based approach to the development of the relationship.

²⁵ Lawrence Dritsas, "Valuing Scotland's Links with Malawi: Inputs from Scotland Malawi Partnership Members," University of Edinburgh School of Social and Political Science and Global Development Academy, October 2010.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Government in synergy with people

A particular feature of this new round of Scotland-Malawi engagement is that it forges creative synergy between popular activism and Government engagement. The Government-to-Government relationship draws its vitality and finds its effectiveness from the multitude of links made by civil society— schools, universities, health boards, local government, community groups, faith-based organisations, and so on. It creates a virtuous circle between Government and people where popular support inspires Government efforts while Government support stimulates popular engagement. The result is that resources committed by Government are multiplied many times over by institutions and individuals within civil society.

The 2005 Cooperation Agreement identified civic governance and society, sustainable economic development, health, and education as broad themes on which collaboration would be developed. Through the newly established International Development Fund, the Government began to make grants to support initiatives in these areas, with £2.4 million granted in 2005, rising to around £8.1 million in 2013.²⁷ A significant innovation in 2013 was the introduction of a Small Grants Scheme. Recognising the unique role smaller and community-led organisations can play in international development, the Scottish Government ring-fenced £500,000 a year of the government's International Development Fund specifically for projects run by organisation with an annual turnover of under £150,000. A strong political consensus supports this grant-making programme, and the place of Malawi as its principal beneficiary. This is apparent in the strong cross-party support that is expressed in Parliamentary debates.²⁸

²⁷ Scottish Executive New Release, 4 November 2005; www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/International/int-dev/Maps/Malawi/2013Projects [14 May 2009].

²⁸ See, e.g., *The Scottish Parliament Official Report: Meeting of the Parliament, Wednesday 7 November 2012*. Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament, 2012, pp. 13133-13181.

A reciprocal partnership for development

The Cooperation Agreement between Scotland and Malawi sets out the basis on which the two nations plan to work together. It states that: "Scotland and Malawi have a long history of collaboration, particularly in health and education. Both countries share a wish to build upon this history by actively engaging through partnership. This is a reciprocal partnership based upon sharing experiences and skills. It is *an opportunity to learn from each other* and to recognise the needs of our two countries."²⁹ Given the great disparity that exists between the two nations in terms of material resources, it might be expected that Scotland has much more to give to Malawi than vice versa. However, Scots who become involved invariably conclude that they have gained much more from their experience than they would ever be able to give. While much of the interaction is currently driven by the urgency of tackling the crippling poverty faced by many in Malawi, it also recognises that no society is as developed as it might be and Scotland too has the potential to learn and grow. By drawing on each other's culture, history and spirit, the two nations are able to strengthen one another in the quest for human flourishing. Reciprocity is foundational to this way of working.

The priority of the relational, the mobilisation of civil society, Government in synergy with people, and a reciprocal partnership for development are the hallmarks of the interaction between Malawi and Scotland which has developed during the early years of the 21st century. Taken together these features, it can be argued, represent a new approach to international development. How does this model stand up when measured against the challenges facing international development work today?

Malawi and Scotland Today: Achievements and Challenges

A combination of historical, political, social, moral and spiritual forces has been at work to forge between Malawi and Scotland an approach to in-

²⁹ Cooperation Agreement between Scotland and Malawi, November 2005, "Malawi After Gleneagles: A Commission for Africa Case Study," Report of the Scotland-Malawi Partnership Conference, November 2005, 5-6, see www.scotland-malawipartnership.org – my italics.

ternational development which demonstrates distinctive and innovative qualities. There can be little doubt that a large number of people have derived personal inspiration from their engagement in development-oriented work undertaken between Malawi and Scotland. Nor that many concrete examples of positive and enduring impact can be cited.

Nonetheless, far too many of Malawi's citizens remain in the grip of unremitting poverty, a reality that might suggest that its axis with Scotland has been ineffective in meeting the challenges of underdevelopment. On the other hand, it can be argued that Malawi is in the eye of a "perfect storm," being landlocked, resource-scarce, over populated and exploited by external forces. Without the Scottish connection the situation might have been even worse. More to the point, it may be within the interaction of Malawi and Scotland that an approach has been formed that will enable Malawi to overcome the poverty which has afflicted the lives of too many of its citizens until now.

How successful it will be in fulfilling this ambition may depend on how far the effort can be taken in relation to issues of scale. Certainly, large numbers of people are involved on both sides of the relationship and an impressive level of resources has been mobilised, particularly through the multiplier factor of Government grants releasing resources many times their value. Still, when measured against the needs of some 16 million people facing serious levels of poverty, it can be argued that the entire effort lacks the scale needed to make a major impact at national level.

Even a doubling or tripling of small-scale bilateral partnerships will still leave the effort open to question as to whether it is simply too small to have any significant impact at national level. With its strength lying in the alliance of a wide range of actors at the micro level, so far the Malawi-Scotland approach has had relatively little to contribute at the macro-economic level in regard to such issues as infrastructure development or capital expenditure.³⁰ Given the failure of so many grand schemes that have been conceived at macro level, a virtue of the Malawi-Scotland approach is that it offers a great range of micro level initiatives that, in

³⁰ Professor Andrew Goudie, email to the author, 18 November 2013.

terms of aggregate impact, have been able to achieve a solid result. Looking to the future, however, a relevant question is how far lessons learned at the micro level can be applied to questions of macroeconomic management.

It remains a question how much the virtues of the relational approach can be scaled up to contribute to economic development at a national level. Might the time be ripe to engage bodies in Scotland concerned with macroeconomic policy and expenditure with their counterparts in Malawi, seeking to bring the strengths of the relational approach to bear at that level? The qualities of mutual respect, careful listening and reciprocity which have been matured at a micro level could now be tested in application to the macroeconomic questions which require to be addressed before the quest to eradicate extreme poverty can succeed.

A question needing to be addressed is whether efforts should be made to be more ambitious in seeking to sensitively extend the relational approach to other critical areas of international development, rather than restrict this approach to the micro – albeit immensely valuable – activities in the economy? Should the effort be made to complement the technical skills and expertise of many national and international development agencies in these macroeconomic fields with the greater listening, understanding and insight that a relational approach can bring?

The challenge to step up from successful discrete projects of limited scope to a scale of engagement that would register at national level is particularly prominent in regard to the strands of the Cooperation Agreement on "Civic Governance and Society" and "Sustainable Economic Development". Even a host of successful projects at micro level can be undermined by poor civic governance. Problems perceived to spring from neo-patrimonialism and corruption in the administrations of Bingu wa Mutharika and Joyce Banda led to crisis of confidence and suspension of international aid.³¹ This alone is enough to highlight the urgent need to address issues of good governance. Here, moreover, is an opportunity for mutual benefit. At a time of political challenge and change in Scotland,

³¹ See Diana Cammack, *Malawi's Political Settlement in Crisis, 2011*. African Power and Politics Programme Background Paper 04. London: Overseas Development Institute, 2011.

issues of good governance are likely to arise and there will be lessons to be learned from the Malawi experience. Likewise, in regard to trade, business and investment there are opportunities for mutual benefit, even if the initial focus needs to be a concerted effort to enable Malawi to advance in the effort to trade its way out of poverty.

A key challenge for the partnership of Malawi and Scotland is whether it can take the virtues of the relational approach and apply them on a scale that will impact Malawi's development on the national level. Already it can be demonstrated both that a distinctive new approach has been developed and that it is having an energising and inspiring effect both in Scotland and in Malawi. It answers Ramalingam's call for "a more systemic, adaptive, networked, dynamic approach."³² While modest in scale and at an early stage in its evolution, the partnership is functioning as "an open innovation network, catalysing and leveraging change."³³ Though challenges remain, this represents significant progress.

Furthermore, an approach based on the priority of the relational, the mobilisation of civil society, the synergy of Government and people, and a reciprocal partnership for development may also have a contribution to make to the wider debate about the future direction of international development. As regards urgent current questions around such matters as participation and empowerment, local ownership and capacity, accountability, monitoring and evaluation, and integrated working, the partnership between Scotland and Malawi might be suggestive for those wrestling with such issues in other contexts. Meanwhile active citizens of Malawi and Scotland are finding ways to work together in their shared quest for human flourishing. Together they draw on history, values and experience that suggest a new approach to international development, one that is already inspirational and calls for still more ambitious application and implementation.

³² Ben Ramalingam, *Aid on the Edge of Chaos: Rethinking International Cooperation in a Complex World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 361.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

20. "Worrisome Trends": The Voice of the Churches in Malawi's Third Term Debate

A telling question in most sub-Saharan African countries is the term of office of the Head of State. Given the historical tendency for executive authority to become concentrated in the office of the President and the centrality of patronage networks in shaping national politics, it is likely that any incumbent President will come under pressure to find ways of remaining in office for as long as possible. Precisely for this reason, in the light of bitter experiences of long-running or "Life" Presidencies, a key element in democratization efforts has been the introduction of a limited term for the President.¹ In Malawi, after Life President Kamuzu Banda's 30-year rule was finally brought to an end by a democratic election, the 1994 Constitution prescribed a maximum of two five-year terms for the State President. During Bakili Muluzi's first term of office there was little likelihood of this becoming a live issue. When Muluzi won the second Presidential election in 1999, however, it was a matter of some importance to see whether he would quickly make it clear that he was now in his final term of office. When no such declaration was forthcoming, the "third term" issue was on the agenda. Soon it emerged that the Government was campaigning for the constitutional amendment that would be required to allow Muluzi to stand for a third term of office.

Though Muluzi himself consistently refused to state whether or not it was his intention to pursue a third term and the Government presented the matter as an issue of principle rather than one specific to the incumbent President, it was apparent to most observers that the motivation behind the campaign was a desire among his supporters that Muluzi should remain in office. When a bill finally came to Parliament on 4 July 2002, it was framed as an "open term" bill – simply removing any restriction on the number of times an incumbent President may be nominated for re-election. The Government claimed that this was a popular measure and succeeded in gaining the support of leaders of the Opposi-

¹ See Jande Banda, 'The Constitutional Change Debate of 1993-95', in Kings M. Phiri and Kenneth R. Ross (eds.), *Democratization in Malawi: A Stocktaking* Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1998, pp. 316-333.

tion so that it seemed likely that the bill would pass. In the event 125 voted in favour, 59 voted against and 5 abstained. The bill was three votes short of the two-thirds majority required to pass an amendment to the Constitution. In a statesmanlike speech Muluzi accepted the outcome but by September it was clear that the governing United Democratic Front was making renewed efforts to secure the necessary Parliamentary majority, this time specifically to allow an incumbent President the opportunity to stand for a third term. Its critics alleged that it was resorting to bribery, intimidation and partisan broadcasting in order to gain sufficient support at the October session of Parliament.² Opposition to the bill, however, remained strong enough to deter the Government from tabling its new bill. Support for the third term campaign continued to ebb away until a session of Parliament specially convened in January 2003 in order to push through provision for a third term revealed that the required two-thirds majority was unattainable. Finally, on 30 March 2003, Muluzi announced his decision to nominate a UDF Presidential candidate – Dr Bingu wa Mutharika.³ The third term bid had failed. Why did a powerful Government fail to secure its objective? At least part of the answer lies in the actions taken by Malawi churches.

The Voice of the Churches

Given the role played by the churches in the early 1990s in Malawi's transition from one-party police state to multi-party democracy,⁴ it comes as little surprise to find that church-state relations were a factor in the third term debate. More than a year before the parliamentary debate this already became apparent with the issue on 22 April 2001 of a

² See e.g. 'Choosing our Destiny' Press Statement by the Public Affairs Committee, Lilongwe, 11 September 2002.

³ 'Message to the Nation' by His Excellency The President Dr Bakili Muluzi, Blantyre, 30 March 2003.

⁴ See *Malawi: A Moment of Truth*, London: CIIR, 1993; Matembo S. Nzunda & Kenneth R. Ross ed., *Church, Law and Political Transition in Malawi 1992-94*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1995; Kenneth R. Ross ed., *God, People and Power in Malawi: Democratization in Theological Perspective*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996.

'pastoral letter'⁵ of the General Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, entitled *Some Worrisome Trends which Undermine the Nurturing of our Young Democratic Culture*.⁶ This letter offered a wide-ranging analysis of social and political issues in Malawi but it was framed in the context of concern that the democratization movement was losing its way and it was quite specific in its evaluation of the third term proposal being canvassed by the Government. It conceded that there could be advantages to the third term 'such as the ability to maintain a good leader rather than lose him on a constitutional technicality, or an assurance of stability and continuity'.⁷ However, the following disadvantages of a third term are listed:

1. In Africa it tends to lead to Autocratic Rule.
2. Dr Muluzi may lose the International reputation he has built.
3. Malawi may lose its reputation as a shining example of democracy in Africa.
4. Every person has a blind spot.
5. Personality cult Syndrome is dangerous.
6. Constitutions should generally not be changed to suit an Individual.
7. Other leaders from the same UDF Party will be denied a chance.⁸

Unsurprisingly the conclusion is: "we are of the strong opinion that the disadvantages outweigh any advantages".⁹ The extent of the Govern-

⁵ Since the epoch-making 1992 pastoral letter of the Roman Catholic Bishops, which ushered in the democratic reforms of 1993-94, any church statement bearing on social and especially political affairs tends to be described as a 'pastoral letter' so the term is taken from its Catholic provenance and applied equally to statements by Protestant churches.

⁶ CCAP General Synod, *Worrisome Trends which Undermine the Nurturing of our Young Democratic Culture*, 22 April 2001.

⁷ *Worrisome Trends*, p. 4.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4-5.

ment's concern about this statement can be gauged by the fact that within a week it had published an 18-page rejoinder.¹⁰ While this might appear to be the kind of open dialogue between church and state that exhibits a healthy democratic culture, there appear to have been tensions which came to the surface quite explosively a few weeks later.

The National Service of Worship is traditionally held on the eve of Independence Day on 6 July. The sermon is awaited with some expectation for, while it has sometimes been anodyne or even sycophantic in relation to the politics of the day, there have also been occasions when the preacher has brought a searching challenge to contemporary national politics. When he was selected to preach at the National Service of Worship held on 5 July 2001 at Mzuzu University, James Tengatenga, Anglican Bishop of Southern Malawi, followed in this latter tradition.¹¹ Unusually, his sermon provoked an immediate and outraged response from the assembled political leaders. As the Moderator and General Secretary of the CCAP Blantyre Synod wrote to the State President a week later: 'During [Bishop Tengatenga's] address some senior UDF members actually shouted "*basi tamva, ulaliki uthe!*"'¹² ("We have heard enough, preacher, who do you think you are?") This vocal indignation at the service was followed by an incident that further heightened church-state tension. When Bishop Tengatenga left the service, he made his way to Mzuzu Hotel, accompanied by a Nkhoma Synod minister, Rev Kingston Kalebe. In a case of mistaken identity, Rev Kalebe was beaten up by a gang of youths who had apparently been instructed by UDF leadership to carry out an assault on Bishop Tengatenga.¹³ As recounted by the Malawi

⁹ Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Response by the Malawi Government to the Issues Raised in the Pastoral Letter of the General Synod of the CCAP* (Lilongwe: Malawi Government Ministry of Information, 30 April 2001).

¹¹ Rt Rev James Tengatenga, Anglican Bishop of Southern Malawi, 'Seek His Kingdom and His Righteousness and All Things Will Be Given to You', sermon preached at the National Service of Worship in Mzuzu on 5 July 2001.

¹² Letter of Rev T.N. Maseya and Rev Daniel Gunya to His Excellency Dr Bakili Muluzi, President of the Republic of Malawi, 13 July 2001.

¹³ See Malawi Council of Churches, 'Statement on the Outrageous Events of 5th July 2001 in Mzuzu', 7 August 2001.

Council of Churches: "Rev Kalebe was assaulted in the presence of members of the celebration committee, ministers and the Speaker of Parliament. He was accused of being a bad preacher even when he had not preached, a clear indication that his assailants were sent. It is the UDF officials who confessed the mistaken identity."¹⁴ In their letter to the State President the Blantyre Synod Moderator and General Secretary raise a number of issues arising from this incident:

- a) This is the first time in the history of Malawi Politics that a member of the Clergy has been physically assaulted in direct response to a sermon.
- b) Members of the Clergy were invited to Mzuzu as guests of the Government. Therefore, their security should have been guaranteed. There were members of the Police Force there at the Mzuzu Hotel, but they took no part to assist Rev Kalebe.
- c) It is our understanding that the purpose of a sermon at such an auspicious occasion is to speak God's Word to the whole nation, highlighting both our achievements and our failures. A prophetic sermon does not attack a particular person or party, rather it brings everyone – leaders and ordinary citizens alike – before the searching eye of God. It is our conviction that God's Word brings judgement but also offers grace and a new way forward. Should a Church minister's sermon offend someone, there are other means of entering into debate and dialogue rather than resorting to violence.¹⁵

These observations lead to a reprimand for the State President: "We would wish to remind you, Your Excellency, that the prayers held at State functions or events of this nature are of paramount importance, so there is need for Government Officials to treat such prayers with the seriousness they deserve. The actions, interjections and unbecoming behaviour portrayed by some of your Senior Cabinet Ministers must be condemned and this should never happen again."¹⁶ Bishop Tengerenga had made no

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Maseya and Gunya to Muluzi.

¹⁶ Ibid.

direct reference to the "third term" issue. In fact, the sermon touched only very lightly on the immediate political issues of the day. But it did emphatically place Malawi in relation to the kingdom of God and contemporary politics to the righteousness of that kingdom. This was sufficient to touch a raw nerve.

Over the subsequent year, this tension between the churches and the Government became increasingly concentrated on the third term issue. In the nature of the case, the "voice" of the churches takes various forms and sounds different notes, rarely entirely in harmony. A feature of church statements in regard to the third term debate, however, has been their unanimity in opposing constitutional amendment. This was already in evidence in the CCAP's *Worrisome Trends* since it bore the signatures not only of the leaders of the Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods but also the Nkhoma Synod.¹⁷ This indicated the unity of the CCAP as a national body, something that had been lacking in the political transition of 1992-94 and which gave the CCAP a voice to which any Government would be wise to pay attention.¹⁸ The force of this church unity was further strengthened when other churches raised their voices to strike remarkably similar notes.

When the Episcopal Conference of Malawi released its next pastoral letter, *Rejoicing and Vigilantly Living in Hope*, on Easter Sunday 2002, it echoed the concerns of the CCAP though in more general terms: "Any amendment to the Constitution should be preceded by broad public consultations and consensus. On fundamental issues, no change should be done without a referendum ... If we do not respect democratic processes and principles, we shall be reverting and backsliding to a one-party system where the independence of the judiciary and legislature was systematically compromised by design. Some of the trends we see today are

¹⁷ *Worrisome Trends*, p. 15.

¹⁸ In contrast to the Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods, which have their origins in Scottish missions and have a tradition of critical engagement with political affairs, the Nkhoma Synod owes its origin to the mission work of the Cape Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and has been less inclined to political engagement. See Kenneth R. Ross, *Here Comes Your King: Christ, Church and Nation in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1998, pp. 174-177.

quite worrisome and deserve immediate redress."¹⁹ A few months later, as the parliamentary debate approached, the Association of Diocesan Clergy of Malawi released a much more direct statement:

On the current third term debate, we have some serious reservations and our stand is EMPHATICALLY NO to the Third Term issue.... We appeal to all Malawians who are serious about democracy to join in saying NO to the THIRD TERM issue and go for a change. Please do demonstrate in any way possible to show that enough is enough and we cannot go on with Bakili Muluzi.²⁰

Similarly the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace stated: "Now is the time to make our contribution to the consolidation of democracy by saying peacefully but firmly NO Third Term. We would like to put it on record, therefore, that we as CCJP say an ABSOLUTE NO to Third Term."²¹

Meanwhile, as it was becoming clear that a bill to amend the Constitution would shortly come before Parliament, the Evangelical Association of Malawi entered the arena and announced that it "wants to appeal to the executive and legislation arms of government to desist from proceeding with the amendment of the country's Constitution to facilitate the third term for the state president."²² The alignment of the Evangelical constituency with the position already advanced by the "mainline" churches was a significant contribution to the emerging unanimity. Still more, a statement that followed from the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Though often inclined to support the government in power, on this occasion, they consciously echoed the concerns raised by the "mainline" churches. The Executive Committee of the Charismatic and Pentecostal Association of Malawi,

appealed to the Executive and Legislative Arms of Government to protect the Constitution and refrain from proceeding with the amend-

¹⁹ [Roman Catholic] Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Rejoicing and Vigilantly Living in Hope*, Pastoral Letter released on 31 March 2002, pp. 4-5.

²⁰ Association of Diocesan Clergy of Malawi, 'Social, Economic and Political Concerns', June 2002.

²¹ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Malawi, 'Press Release on the Third Term', May 2002.

²² Evangelical Association of Malawi, Press Release, 1 June 2002.

ment of the Constitution to allow the Incumbent President a Third Term.... It should be known that the future of this nation is delicately in the hands of members of Parliament. It will not be wise morally, spiritually and politically for the members of Parliament to introduce and debate this issue against the voice of the Church represented by the Episcopal Conference of Malawi, Malawi Council of Churches, Evangelical Association of Malawi, the Charismatic and Pentecostal Association of Malawi, and NGOs.²³

By way of consolidating their position, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi and the Malawi Council of Churches, meeting at Limbe Cathedral on 29 May 2002, issued a statement opposing the third term and arguing that:

Third term or open term on presidential limit dilutes the principle of transparency and accountability which is one of the cornerstones of the democratic principles upon which our Constitution is founded. Strict adherence to term limits ensures that holders of public office will within limited periods relinquish their immunity that comes with the offices they hold so that they may fully account for acts and omissions done during their terms of office. Removal of term limits is tantamount to betrayal of the spirit of the Constitution that is aimed at curbing abuse of power that Malawians experienced during the one-party regime that people rejected in 1994.²⁴

Finally, the Public Affairs Committee, encompassing the Episcopal Conference of Malawi, Moslem Association of Malawi²⁵ and Malawi Council of Churches, "in conjunction with Civil Society Organisations in Malawi" stated that it "wishes to appeal to all Parliamentarians to vote against the proposed amendment to section 83(3) of the Constitution.... You may

²³ Statement of the Charismatic and Pentecostal Association of Malawi (CHAP-EL), June 2002, Nyasanet, June 2002 No. 672, posted to the web 13 June 2002.

²⁴ Episcopal Conference of Malawi and Malawi Council of Churches, Press Statement, 29 May 2002.

²⁵ The dynamics of Christian-Muslim relations, and their political outworking in the context of a Muslim President, call for detailed study. While the present article has restricted its scope to attending to the voice(s) of the churches, there is need for further analysis which takes full account of the Christian-Muslim dimension.

receive all the gifts from those who support the Bill but we call upon you to reject the amendment. Demonstrate to the nation that you can stand for the values of Democracy. Say no to the proposed amendment. God is with you."²⁶ Taken together, these statements from across the ecclesiastical spectrum amount to a chorus of protest, all the more audible in the context of a lack of organised political opposition to the constitutional amendment. There can be little doubt that this strong position, taken publicly by the churches, combined with personal appeal to the Christian conscience of members of Parliament, had significant bearing on the outcome of the parliamentary vote. The reference in the PAC statement to "gifts" possibly being received by members of Parliament from promoters of the bill is a clear appeal to conscience, which was followed up by the lobbying of individual MPs. After the defeat of the bill, on 28 July 2002 the Church Development Coordinating Committee called the public again to Njamba Freedom Park to give thanks to God for the defeat of the open term bill in Parliament. The failure of efforts to drive the bill through Parliament was ascribed to "heavenly intervention".²⁷

However, we may regard the heavenly dynamics of this episode, there can be little question that the action of the churches did have quite a decisive political impact. It may therefore be instructive to unfold its leading characteristics.

Custodian of Democratic Values

Having been the widely acknowledged midwives of democracy at the close of the one-party rule of Kamuzu Banda, the churches are quite self-conscious in presenting themselves as the protectors of democratic values in Malawi. Reporting on an interdenominational service of worship held in May 2002, the *Presbyterian Diary* notes that: "The clergy observed that politicians who are in authority now, have forgotten that it was the Church which played a vital role in the introduction of pluralistic democracy in Malawi."²⁸ This self-ascribed role is implicit in the very title

²⁶ Statement of the Public Affairs Committee, *The Lamp*, No. 36 (July-August 2002), p. 1.

²⁷ Gedion Munthali, 'God Stopped Open Terms Bill', *The Nation*, 29 July 2002.

²⁸ *Presbyterian Diary*, June 2002, p. 3.

of the General Synod pastoral letter: "some worrisome trends which undermine the nurturing of our young democratic culture".

In particular, appeal is made in *Worrisome Trends* to the definitive experience of the democratic transition of 1992-94:

Whether we are called to a station of leadership or ordinary citizenship in life, it is expected that we would conduct ourselves as men and women of integrity. Others should expect us to live up to the principles for which we have fought along the way. During the democratic transition of 1992-94, the present rulers fought hard to reduce the power of the executive branch of government and in the process to widen people's rights, choices and opportunities.... We therefore do not understand why those principles should now be negated or watered down in favour of narrower interests.²⁹

In resisting proposed measures regarded by the churches as undemocratic, appeal could be made to people's bitter memories of the Banda era. For example, on the proposal that the State President should have power to nominate up to 20 members of Parliament, *Worrisome Trends* observes: "Malawians have not forgotten how that provision used to be abused during the past regime. It used to happen that a parliamentary candidate who was rejected by the electorate in a general election would all the same find his way into parliament as a nominated member of Parliament (to the disappointment of Malawians). We do not want to go back to that hated system, do we?"³⁰

In their letter of protest to the President, following the assault on Rev Kalebe at Mzuzu, Revs Maseya and Gunya of Blantyre Synod, referred to the repression of the Banda regime as a salutary reminder of what can go wrong when freedom of expression is not respected: "As you are very aware, Malawians suffered a great deal under the doctoral [sic] regime of the late President Banda and the MCP. Surely, we do not want to return to a situation where political intolerance and intimidation becomes a norm in Malawi."³¹ This sense of determination to learn from the mis-

²⁹ *Worrisome Trends*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 6.

³¹ Maseya and Gunya to Muluzi.

takes of the one-party era had been powerfully stated by Bishop James Tengatenga in his charge at his enthronement in 1998:

We will support the government when it does good but we will not hold our peace when it goes wrong. It is our calling in Christ to mirror the will of God to the World and especially to this our mother land. We will not sit quietly when injustice and the gravy train get the better of our politicians whatever their political shade or position. Never again will we ever obey the state when it tells us that the church's role is to pray and bless the status quo. Never again will we submit to the powers that be when they take it upon themselves to be arbiters in matters of God like it used to be when the state edited our sermons in the past. Never again will the church keep quiet when some are being persecuted like we did during the Jehovah's [Witnesses'] experiences in the 60s and 70s. The Truth will not be enhanced by such evil means. Such collusion with the state has no place in the church.³²

Four years later, as Chair of the Anglican Council in Malawi, Bishop Tengatenga, pleaded for "a free, fair, full and open public debate" on the third term issue, "so that in learning the lessons of history we are not in danger of repeating the mistakes we made".³³

Still more vividly, preaching to the interdenominational service at Njamba Freedom Park in Blantyre on 9 June 2002, General Synod Moderator Felix Chingota stated:

Beloved in the Lord, a nation without history or memory is a dead nation. The part of our history that we are asked to forget is the one that distinguishes us as Malawians. That memory shaped our nation. We cannot agree that Orton Chirwa, Dick Matenje, Aaron Gadama, Twaibu Sangala and David Chiwanga shed their blood for nothing.³⁴ We do not believe either that all those people who were given over to crocodiles died in vain.³⁵ For us the memory of that history is a creative one. It

³² James Tengatenga, 'Charge at Enthronement, 10 May 1998', *Religion in Malawi* Vol. 9 (1999), pp. 38-39.

³³ Statement of the Bishops of the Anglican Council in Malawi, June 2002.

³⁴ Politicians who died in suspicious circumstances during the one-party era.

³⁵ It was an infamous boast of Kamuzu Banda that his opponents would be meat for the crocodiles.

appeared to be a dangerous and subversive memory in 1993. It should not be rubbed off today. To do so is tantamount to treason.... It is criminal and blasphemous. It is blasphemous because the blood of those martyrs was the very blood of Jesus who always sides with the oppressed. Should this bill pass in Parliament, the blood of those martyrs will again cry out to God for vindication that they did not die in vain.³⁶

The memory of terrible mistakes made during the one-party period and the definitive experience of correction in 1992-94 give the church a sense of being a custodian of democratic values and of duty to invoke the 'never again' spirit which marked that time.

Champion of the Constitution

Another recurrent feature of the action of the churches is the extent to which they understand themselves as champions of the constitution, particularly when it is under threat of time-serving amendment at the hands of self-interested politicians. "We feel concerned," stated the CCAP General Synod in *Worrisome Trends*, "about moves that are being taken to amend the constitution of Malawi (the Supreme Law of the land) as put in place during 1994-95, in the short term interest of those currently in power."³⁷ In its response to the events of 5 July 2002, the Malawi Council of Churches included the following observation: "Lately several events have occurred which have not only undermined the very principles upon which our constitution is based, but the very constitution is being tampered with. If the foundation upon which our nation is built is weakened our nation is in danger of crumbling into a mangled heap of political anarchy with the loss of all the freedoms, peace and order."³⁸

This concern was echoed a year later by the Catholic Bishops who stated: "All of us citizens, especially the governors and rulers as role models,

³⁶ Rt Rev Dr Felix Chingota, Moderator of the CCAP General Synod, sermon at interdenominational service of worship on 9 June 2002, *Presbyterian Diary*, June 2002, p. 5.

³⁷ *Worrisome Trends*, p. 1.

³⁸ Malawi Council of Churches, 'Statement on the Outrageous Events of 5th July 2001 in Mzuzu', 7 August 2001.

must abide by the rule of law, ought to respect the Constitution and the procedures laid therein. The Constitution is the Law of the Land and should not be tampered with for quick political gains. Any amendment to the Constitution should be preceded by broad public consultations and consensus. On fundamental issues, no change should be done without a referendum."³⁹ The introduction of a liberal, democratic constitution in Malawi had seemed to some observers to be of very limited significance when it comes to addressing entrenched injustices and systematic economic deprivation.⁴⁰ The third term debate, however, has seen the Constitution being used as an important point of reference in asserting the rights and aspirations of the people over against the ruling political elite. For example, it is significant that the priests of the Catholic Diocese of Lilongwe, when addressing the issue of famine, include the following statement in their appeal to the nation and the international community: "We note that the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi section 30 no 2 says: 'The state shall take measures to implement the right to development. The measures shall include equality of opportunity for everyone in accessing basic resources, education, health services, food, shelter, employment and infrastructure.'"⁴¹ Appealing to the Constitution on an issue such as food security lends a popular valence to what might otherwise seem to most citizens an arcane and irrelevant document.

Voice of the People

The churches consciously take upon themselves the role of speaking for the people. "This concern of ours," begins *Worrisome Trends*, "is rooted in a genuine patriotism characterized by a Christian love for the people of Malawi."⁴² Besides a general sense of patriotism, it is possible in Malawi to recall that the origins of the modern nation owe not a little to the ac-

³⁹ [Roman Catholic] Episcopal Conference of Malawi, *Rejoicing and Vigilantly Living in Hope*, Pastoral Letter, 31 March 2002, p. 4.

⁴⁰ See Fidelis E. Kanyongolo, 'The Limits of Liberal Democratic Constitutionalism in Malawi', in Phiri and Ross, *Democratization in Malawi*, pp. 353-75.

⁴¹ 'Appeal of Priests of Lilongwe Diocese to the Nation and the International Community', 14 February 2001.

⁴² *Worrisome Trends*, p. 1.

tivities of Christian missionaries.⁴³ This early history was invoked by Bishop Tengeru in his sermon at the National Day of Worship: "It was the missionaries that then invited the British Government to come and protect them. The country was not a chaplaincy to British settlers like most British colonies. The missionaries settled before the politician! One can almost say that Malawi was imagined as a Church!"⁴⁴ Out of this imagination, churches understand themselves to have a particular responsibility to voice the concerns of the people to the government of the day.

They can also draw a mandate from their numerical strength and strong popular base. In addressing themselves to international donor countries, Catholic and Presbyterian church leaders claim a popular mandate in these terms: "You may wish to know that the membership of these two churches combined is approximately seven (7) million i.e. 70 per cent of the total population of Malawi."⁴⁵ While this may be overstating the case somewhat, there is enough truth in the claim to merit the churches being taken seriously as representatives of a large part of the national population.

This representative function can, on occasion, find expression in influential public events. After President Muluzi, at a public rally on 28 May 2002, issued a directive banning public demonstrations on the third term issue, it fell to the churches to offer a vehicle for the expression of popular feeling. The interdenominational service of worship held at Njamba Freedom Park in Blantyre on 9 June 2002, with parallel events in the Central and Northern Regions, gave an opportunity for the public to demonstrate their concern about the third term issue in a peaceful way. Government attempts to restrict public demonstrations therefore proved counterproductive. Prayer became the medium of protest and this lent added power to popular opposition to the bill.

⁴³ See Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, pp. 105-42; McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, pp. 197-216.

⁴⁴ James Tengeru, 'Seek His Kingdom'.

⁴⁵ [Malawian Church Leaders], 'Discussion Paper on the Forthcoming Donor Consultations', 2001, p. 6.

Appeal to the Bible

In seeking to understand Malawian society today it would be unwise to underestimate the currency of the biblical text or the salience of biblical authority. Vernacular translations of the Bible are by far the most commonly found books and the biblical narratives, language and teaching are integral to daily conversation at all levels. The political relevance of this is that a sacred text, widely regarded as authoritative, is one of the immediately available resources to anyone wishing to protest against prevailing trends.⁴⁶ *Worrisome Trends* opens with two quotations from the Old Testament, the contemporary application of which would not be lost on most readers and hearers. From the book of Nehemiah: "Some time later many of the people, both men and women, began to complain against their fellow Jews ... Others said, 'We have had to mortgage our fields and vineyards and houses to get enough corn to keep us from starving'. We are the same race as our fellow Jews. Aren't our children as good as theirs? We are helpless because our fields and vineyards have been taken away from us ... When I heard their complaints ... I denounced the leaders and officials of the people and told them, 'You are oppressing your brother!'"⁴⁷ From the book of Isaiah: "Some day there will be a king who rules with integrity, and national leaders will govern with justice. Their eyes and ears will be open to the needs of the people.... They will act with understanding and will say what they mean."⁴⁸ These texts are more than a perfunctory religious preface. They indicate the legitimacy and the authority that the Church carries as it addresses the politics of the day. When the churches issued a "Discussion Paper on the Forthcoming Donor Consultations," they argued for their own participation on the basis that they would be "guided by the Word of God".⁴⁹

⁴⁶ For a study of the use of the Bible in Malawi's transition from the one-party system to multiparty democracy in 1992-94 see Felix L. Chingota, 'The Use of the Bible in Social Transformation' in Ross, *God, People and Power in Malawi*, pp. 41-62.

⁴⁷ Nehemiah 5:1-7.

⁴⁸ Isaiah 32:1-5.

⁴⁹ [Malawian Church Leaders], 'Discussion Paper on the Forthcoming Donor Consultations', 2001, p. 6.

The choice of scriptural passages can be very pointed. When the passage in 2 Samuel about David taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite was read at (highly politicized) interdenominational prayers attended by Brown Mpinganjira, the reading was interpreted as criticism of Mpinganjira's conduct while he was a cabinet minister.⁵⁰ The Bible in this way provides a frame of reference, a commonly understood code, within which political points can be made. This accords with the tradition of raising sensitive issues obliquely or indirectly. It calls for an exercise of imagination – something for which Bishop Tengaenga called in the sermon that attracted such ire from Government ministers at the National Service of Worship in July 2001. The purpose of the sacred text in challenging the politics of the day is well-expressed in a quotation which the Bishop repeated in the course of his sermon: "Can we *imagine* a politics of justice and compassion in place of the present global politics of oppression and economic idolatry? Dare we *imagine* an economics of equality and care in place of the dominant economics of affluence and poverty? Can we *imagine* what would happen if we began to nurture our children with prophetic vision and with biblical dreams?"⁵¹ It is that quality of dreaming or imagining which is evoked by the sensitive use of the biblical text and which can provide a challenge to the existing political system.

Engaging the Politics of Patronage

A deficiency in Malawi's post-dictatorship politics, soon apparent to perceptive observers, has been the endurance of an understanding of politics as patronage. As Peter von Doepp noted in 1998, "in Malawi (and elsewhere) access to the state is viewed as the primary means of obtain-

⁵⁰ 2 Samuel 11:1-27. 'In current Malawian political dispensation, it is only Mpinganjira as a politician who like David used his position to snatch somebody's wife. It is no secret that when Mpinganjira was a cabinet minister he snatched Lizzie Chipendo former wife of Matthew Lossa, a devout Catholic who had to go through a lot of counselling after the wife had been snatched.' Peter Banda, 'Malawi's Interdenominational Prayers Expose Hidden Motive', *Malawi Insider*, posted to the web 21 June 2002.

⁵¹ J. Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than It Used to Be* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995, pp. 192-93, cit. Tengaenga, 'Seek His Kingdom'.

ing and accumulating wealth. In turn, a distinct set of the political practices ensue which are antithetical to stability, democracy and development."⁵² Lewis Dzimhiri has offered a frank assessment of political leadership in the multiparty era: "The problem with the leadership which has emerged in Malawi since the beginning of the democratic transition is that it has been committed to democracy in rhetoric only. In practice it has mystified the masses by being unprincipled, unpredictable, and as obsessed with personal material gain as that of the previous, autocratic era."⁵³ In *Worrisome Trends*, it is possible to sense that the CCAP leaders are prepared to confront such anti-democratic practices as nepotism and cronyism: "Surely there are sufficient indicators to show the extent the rural masses have realised the fallacy of voting for leadership which will perpetuate its own interests and that of its 'close supporters' at the expense of national socio-economic and political developments. Malawians are tired of people put in offices who bring in unprincipled personal agenda and selfishness in the governance system."⁵⁴

The politics of patronage takes a very blatant form in the President's practice of distributing funds to needy causes in the course of his visits and rallies. This generally went unchallenged in the early years of Bakili Muluzi's Presidency but not in its later years. The Association of Diocesan Clergy of Malawi took up this matter quite directly: "Just take the presidential behaviour of dishing out money to people at rallies and allowing MPs to beg at such rallies. Who checks on such behaviour and who audits such money? What is the use of the Budget Session of our Parliamentarians? If Bakili Muluzi cannot go to an area, does it mean the people in that area have no needs demanding money in this country? Where does Bakili get such money to dish out at will like this?"⁵⁵ Questions like these sug-

⁵² Peter van Doepp, 'The Kingdom Beyond *Zasintha*: Churches and Political Life in Malawi's Post-authoritarian Era', in Phiri & Ross (eds), *Democratization in Malawi*, p. 107.

⁵³ L.B. Dzimhiri, 'Competitive Politics and Chameleon-Like Leaders', in Phiri & Ross (eds), *Democratization in Malawi*, p. 88.

⁵⁴ *Worrisome Trends*, p. 7, emphasis in the original.

⁵⁵ Association of Diocesan Clergy of Malawi (ADCOM), 'Social, Economic and Political Concerns', June 2002.

gest that the politics of patrimonialism and clientage in Malawi may now come under some significant scrutiny.

This stands in contrast to the situation during the early years of the multiparty era (1994-96) when, as von Doepp observes, "by ignoring basic issues of wealth and poverty, power and powerlessness, and the routine political practices associated therewith, the churches help to recreate the social disparities which afflict Malawi."⁵⁶ The silence of the churches on issues of the structure and management of the economy which von Doepp detected in the mid-1990s was much less apparent in the statements of 2001-02. The PAC Statement *Choosing our Destiny* observed: "While we are told that the incumbent president has been successful and he should be allowed to continue, the Human Development Index for Malawi 2002 shows that there has been a steady decline in health care delivery, education and economic growth and the general standards of living."⁵⁷ By engaging with these pressing economic concerns, the churches entered the sphere of what Jean-Francois Bayart has described as "the politics of the belly" with greater insistence and determination than was apparent in earlier periods of political transition.⁵⁸ It may become more difficult for Government to avoid being made accountable for prevailing economic deprivation.

Conclusion

The successful campaign against the 'third term' was led by the churches. As the veteran columnist D.D. Phiri commented: "Judging by what is being said about the third term for a president of Malawi, it is clear that the opponents of the proposal are leaders of the main churches."⁵⁹ The *UDF News* of 13-17 June 2002 bemoaned the fact that, when the open term bill was being widely supported by the Parliamentary Opposition, an "extra-Parliamentary Opposition" was emerging: "a few people are behaving as if suddenly the Catholic Church is now a Political Party and the CCAP

⁵⁶ Van Doepp, 'The Kingdom Beyond *Zasintha*', p. 113.

⁵⁷ Public Affairs Committee, *Choosing our Destiny*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (New York and London: Longman), 1993.

⁵⁹ D.D. Phiri, 'Politics and the Clergy', *The Nation*, 11 June 2002.

Church is now a Political Party".⁶⁰ Likewise Davis Kapito, UDF Governor for the Southern Region, expressed outrage at a public rally that "churches have abandoned their Bibles and are busy protesting about the third term".⁶¹

This could be viewed as cause for congratulations to the churches. They have not reverted to a quietist or chaplaincy role in relation to the Government but have retained the capacity to offer prophetic critique and to function as agents of change. They have succumbed neither to the blandishments of Government favour nor to the intimidation of threatened or actual violence. There is an integrity to the position of the churches which can be taken as a sign of hope. They have resisted, at least to a significant extent, the pressures indicated by Jande Banda when he wrote: "Critics of those in power, so necessary for the realisation of a healthy democracy, do not survive for long. They are silenced not by state weaponry but by state patronage."⁶² Resistance to such pressures is a significant factor in a political environment characterised by corruption and clientage.

It is only right to salute those who exercise such courage. Yet at the same time there are questions to be raised about the role being played by the churches. Is it a healthy situation where they appear almost to have a monopoly of civil society activism? There is a sense in which, in the transition to democracy in 1992-94, the churches were deputising for an absent political opposition and absent civil society. The one-party system had discouraged not only political opposition but also the emergence of an active civil society. So, in the absence or weakness of other potential agents of change, it fell to the churches to be prime movers in introducing a new political dispensation.⁶³ What was then to be hoped is that both a robust political opposition and a vibrant civil society would emerge which would safeguard democracy, allowing the churches to step

⁶⁰ 'Leave Politics to the Politicians', *UDF News*, 13-17 June 2002.

⁶¹ Imran Panjwani, 'Muluzi bans all 'third term' related demonstrations', *Malawi Here*, www.malawi.com, 29 May 2002.

⁶² Jande Banda, 'The Constitutional Change Debate', p. 326.

⁶³ See John R. Minnis, 'Prospects and Problems for Civil Society in Malawi', in Phiri and Ross, *Democratization in Malawi*, pp. 138-41.

back from direct political action. The fact that after ten years it again fell to the churches to lead the movement to safeguard democracy suggests that there may have been a failure at the level of promoting the development of civil society for which the churches must share responsibility with others.⁶⁴

The "lead" role of the churches in representing the concerns of civil society is implicitly acknowledged in a statement released jointly on 6 June 2002 by the Civil Liberties Committee, the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, the National Women Lobby and Rights Group, Malawi Watch, the Forum for National Dialogue, the Commission for Democracy and Development. In introducing their intention to express their opposition to the open term bill, they state that they are writing "to support the Episcopal Conference of Malawi".⁶⁵ CONGOMA (the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi) did issue a statement warning about the threat posed to Malawi's democracy by the third term issue but it lacked the authority, incisiveness and popular base of the church statements.⁶⁶ The Forum for the Defence of the Constitution, which mobilised public opposition in 2002-03, depended on the churches as an organisational base and was chaired by Blantyre Synod General Secretary Daniel Gunya. It is difficult to resist the conclusion of George Dambula that "the religious community remains one of the most powerful, *if not the only powerful*, component of civil society in a country like Malawi."⁶⁷

What is open to debate is whether this is a healthy or desirable situation either for the churches themselves or for the society at large. If the prominence of the churches serves to mask the failure of opposition poli-

⁶⁴ This situation was already identified in Manfred Glagow et al., *Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi: Their Contributions for Development and Democratization*, Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1997, p. 158.

⁶⁵ Civil Society Joint Statement, 6 June 2002, Nyasanet June 2002 No. 679.

⁶⁶ Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA), Press Statement, 23 May 2002.

⁶⁷ G. Damula, 'Ten Years of PAC: Is the Lamp Still Burning?', *The Lamp*, No. 35 (May-June 2002), p. 20. The role of the Catholic-sponsored magazine *The Lamp* has been significant in demonstrating what a non-partisan, pro-democracy publication can contribute to the national political discourse.

tics and active civil society, then it may be a symptom of disease rather than a sign of health. It is pertinent to ask here whether the contribution made by the churches is one which could only be made by churches, drawing on their distinctive faith and tradition, or is it one which could be expected to be made by civil society at large? Also it is worth recalling that political engagement is easiest for churches when there is some manifest injustice to be confronted.⁶⁸ The patient, laborious task of building a healthy political culture is one to which churches find it harder to contribute meaningfully. Yet it is this upon which a healthy democracy depends, rather than upon crisis management. Hope may be drawn from the observation of *The Lamp* editorial that, "The [third term] debate, inside and outside parliament, has become a real school of civic education."⁶⁹

Given that direct political action by the churches has been required and has been delivered, it should be noted that its effectiveness was greatly increased by their unity and unanimity. The dynamics of the third term debate serve to illustrate the reality that the struggle for the unity of the church has a bearing on the politics of the nation. The CCAP General Synod had, as a result of its last full meeting in 2000, achieved a greater degree of unity than had been known for many years. This unity gave a force to *Worrisome Trends* much greater than anything that could have been achieved by any branches of a fragmented CCAP. As one church constituency after another raised its voice, there was striking consistency and unanimity in what they had to say. Had the churches been divided, their chances of influencing the course of events would have been much reduced.

The most decisive factor is that a climate of expectation has been cultivated in Malawi where the churches are expected to champion democratic values and principles. The term 'voice of the voiceless' has become almost a mantra but it does serve to create an expectation of the

⁶⁸ See Martin Ott, 'The Role of the Christian Churches in Democratic Malawi', in Martin Ott, Kings M. Phiri and Nandini Patel eds., *Malawi's Second Democratic Elections: Process, Problems and Prospects*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000, pp. 122-129.

⁶⁹ *The Lamp*, November-December 2002, editorial, p. 1.

churches, both in the minds of their leaders and in society at large. Though a counter rhetoric about "churches meddling in politics" is frequently offered by politicians opposed to the intervention of the church on any given point, there is no serious question of the voice of the churches not being accorded a legitimate place in the public arena. Rather than being midwives of democracy whose role is completed with the birth, the churches remain prominent in the nurturing and development of democratic politics ten years after the transition to democracy. It is their voice that has proved decisive in defeating what was arguably the most formidable obstacle to be placed in the path of democratization in Malawi at the turn of the 21st century. The integrity of the voice(s) of the churches is likely to be a significant factor in the shaping of Malawian political life for the foreseeable future.

21. What Theological Education for Africa Today?

Not long after I started teaching at the University of Malawi in Zomba in 1988, I was in the University Library one day when I became aware of a commotion taking place in one corner of the otherwise silent reading room. On investigation I discovered that a heated discussion was taking place among some of the junior staff, who were supposed to be returning books to their places on the shelves. What was it all about? Quickly I gathered that the question at the centre of their debate was how it could be possible for Jesus Christ to be, at the same time, both divine and human. Not a question that would surprise you in a systematic theology classroom but here it was as a point of pressing and urgent concern to some of the most junior members of the support staff. I thought back to the situation in the UK – if you encountered a group of ordinary people, blue-collar workers, in a heated debate what are the chances they would be discussing the hypostatic union of divine and human in the person of Jesus Christ? Not very high! This chance encounter brought home to me what an entirely different context I had entered in regard to the provenance of the theological endeavour. Here was a world much more like that of the early church when it was said that in Constantinople you could not buy a loaf of bread without the baker asking you what you thought about the question of the person of Christ!

Later I read this comment of Harold Turner: "Theology as a science depends upon access to its appropriate data in their most authentic and vital forms. If we regard the data of theology as being the revelations and acts of the Divine, the post-biblical and contemporary manifestations of these data will occur less vividly in a dispirited Western Church with declining numbers and morale. On the other hand, the data will be more evident and accessible in unsophisticated churches where the living God is taken seriously as present in the healing and conquering power of the Spirit, with a gospel-generated growth and a spiritual creativity and confidence. Here at the growing edges of Christianity in its most dynamic forms, the theologian is encouraged to do scientific theology again, because he [or she] has a whole living range of contemporary data on which to work. It is not that these dynamic areas of the Christian world

are free from imperfection; but being full of old and new heresies they need theology and offer it an important task."¹

This was the reality that I had sensed in my early encounter with the junior library staff and over eleven years of participation in the theological task in Africa, my sense of its excitement, dynamism, privilege and responsibility grew ever wider and deeper. It is important to begin here because it is all too easy to focus on the deficiencies, weaknesses and shortcomings of African theological institutions and theologians. When necessary critique is offered we need to remember at the same time that there is a field in Africa for theological investigation, analysis, hypothesis and construction which offers to the whole world the prospect of a great refreshment and renewal of our understanding of Christian faith that may be key to its prospects in the 21st century. There are enviable strengths here that have already begun to be exploited to the benefit of the whole oecumene. "Authentic theological scholarship," writes Andrew Walls, "must arise out of Christian mission and, therefore, from the principal theatres of mission. Theology is about making Christian decisions in critical situations, and it is in the southern continents that those decisions will be most pressing, and the key theological developments are accordingly to be looked for."² In this sense we turn to the theological task in Africa with a sense both of reverence and of excitement, fuelled by the expectation that here is a journey that leads to the rediscovery of Jesus Christ for our time.

Expectation and Reality

We have to admit, however, that this sense of creativity and discovery is not always immediately apparent in the average African theological institution. Even today, when we are quite far into the postcolonial period, you can still find many a seminary which, both in content and in method, has done little more than transplant a traditional Western curriculum on

¹ Harold W. Turner, "The Contribution of Studies on Religion in Africa to Western Religious Studies," in Mark Glasswell and Edward Fashole-Luke ed., *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World*, London: SPCK, 1974, pp. 177-78.

² Andrew F. Walls, "Christian Scholarship in Africa in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4/2 (December 2001), p. 47.

to the soil of Africa. Students laboriously fulfil the demands of an alien system for which they feel no ownership and which bears little relation either to their earlier life or to their future service. Even when a course on African theology is added to the inherited curriculum it is often framed within the parameters already laid down rather than opening up new ways of doing theology. In the words of Benezet Bujo: "African theology is a reaction."³ This has meant that even impressive efforts at theological reconstruction have tended to remain in the abstract, unconnected with the vibrant religious life that ought to form their natural source and context. This has been recognised even by some of the foremost exponents of such theology. Charles Nyamiti has written that: "none of the existing African Christologies has had any appreciable influence in the life of the African churches".⁴

This detachment of the theological enterprise from the life and faith of the community is manifest not only in the construction of theology but equally in the institutions of theological education. The institutional development of theological education in Africa has tended to have somehow a life of its own and to remain detached from the reality with which it is supposedly engaged - the spread of the gospel and the call to discipleship within African societies and cultures. As Kwame Bediako trenchantly remarks: "... these forms of theological training in themselves constitute a crisis for Africa, in that they appear not to connect with the redeeming, transforming activity of the Living God in the African setting,

³ Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, New York: Orbis, 1992, p. 75.

⁴ Charles Nyamiti, "African Christologies Today" in R.J. Schreiter ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, London: SCM, 1992, p. 18. In the same vein Aylward Shorter described African theology as "a notional theology ... not couched ... in the grammar of real assent - the imaginative expression of popular faith. Aylward Shorter, "Folk Christianity and Functional Christology," *AFER*, vol. 24 no. 3 (June 1982), p. 135.

and so are ineffectual in equipping God's people for mission and for the transformation of African society."⁵

There is need for a reorientation of theology so that it springs naturally from the dynamism of popular faith and from the struggles of the believing community. The need and the opportunity in the African situation today is for a theology which is much more adventurous and original. As in earlier periods of renewal and reformation there is the possibility of rethinking Christianity in new thought forms, in response to new challenges and by drawing on resources never before utilised in the exposition of the faith. Here lies the ground for confidence on the part of those concerned for theological education in Africa. In front of us stands the possibility of a theology that, in the words of Kwame Bediako, is founded upon "new ventures of faith, new initiatives of intellectual and spiritual formation and new practical obedience to the call of the Living God in engagement with the world".⁶

In calling for confidence and for an adventurous approach I am immediately conscious that conditions in most of Africa are not such as to encourage a sense of adventure. Quite the reverse – with desperate food shortages, the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the crumbling of social institutions, the meltdown of political structures and sometimes even the outbreak of civil war, it is not an environment with much luxury for dilettante intellectual adventures. Comfortable and often bored Westerners go off on adventure holidays to break out of the stifling security and tedium of their lives. In most African situations today, there is no need to manufacture dangers and risks – they press in from every side. This makes it hard to think of doing anything other than to think of safety first and sustaining inherited patterns and securing your own position often looks like the safe thing to do. We who come from the outside to share in some small measure in the theological task in Africa need to remember that we have the luxury of coming and going. It is easy for us to have an

⁵ Kwame Bediako, "The African Renaissance and Theological Reconstruction: the Challenge of the Twenty-first Century," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4/2 (December 2001), p. 29.

⁶ Kwame Bediako, "The African Renaissance and Theological Reconstruction," p. 29.

adventurous spirit when it is not our very life and whole future which is at stake. It is quite a different perspective you have when you have nowhere else to go and you face an environment that bristles with threats and dangers. Caution and conservatism are quite natural reactions.

Yet is there not in the call of Christ a call to adventure whatever our circumstances? Is there not a sense in which it is against all the odds that God calls us to show what our faith is made of? Is it not ours to walk in the way of Abraham who "against all hope ... in hope believed ... who faced the fact that his body was as good as dead ... and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet ... did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God"?⁷ It is in the most impossible of situations that faith ventures forth and shows what it is worth. It is from this perspective that I dare to suggest that there are some adventurous steps that might be taken by theological education in Africa.

I would like to suggest three areas that call for theological adventure and then three areas of tension that need to be explored. The first three are more to do with setting the theological agenda while the second three are more to do with the institutional shape of theological education.

Engaging with History

As I pondered the problem of the apparent detachment of theology and theological education from the concrete reality of the peoples of Africa, one thing that impressed itself upon me was the lack of attention to *history* in the theological discussion. Culture has been the primary dialogue partner for theology and indeed a very serious conversation about faith and culture has been much needed since Christianity was so often introduced in a way that was insensitive to cultural realities. The problem I find with the discourse is that it has been a timeless, ahistorical understanding of culture that has tended to prevail. Theology is essentially a dialogue between the biblical text and the vernacular world in Africa. Certainly, this is a rich and dynamic field and will continue to be necessary and rewarding. However, it is one where little attention tends to be paid to the concrete circumstances of the believing community within

⁷ Romans 8:18-20.

which this dialogue occurs. A 'faith and culture' approach tends to posit an engagement between a static religious entity and a timeless sphere of culture.⁸

What is missed here is the fact that the community in which the meeting between Christian faith and traditional culture takes place is a community moving through a particular history. This offers a source for doing theology which I believe has been insufficiently tapped: the history of the Christian communities in Africa as they have responded to the times through which they have lived. It is precisely within the dynamic history of the encounter of African peoples with Christian faith, amidst social change, that African cultural identity can be properly understood in theological terms.

Such attention to history is proper to Christian faith. The people of Israel in Old Testament times were distinguished by this – that in contrast to the other peoples round about them, they found the matrix of their religious life not by reference to nature but rather by reference to a particular history. This concentration on history as the primary locus of divine revelation is intensified in the New Testament where we find the faith of the first Christians so firmly centred on the history connected with Jesus Christ that very little is said about other forms of revelation. This fundamental concentration on the particular history of Jesus Christ leads also to an appreciation of the significance of every moment of history. The coming of Christ to a particular time and place does not act to render every other time and place of no account. Quite the reverse – it serves to charge every location and every moment with the capacity to be the time and the place where we meet with the God who comes near to us in Jesus Christ. It also means that we know God not by separating ourselves from what is happening in the history of our time but rather by engaging with it and discerning where Jesus Christ is in it and what it means to follow him in that particular context.

⁸ This characterisation was suggested by Adrian Hastings when he commented that African theology became early "something of a dialogue between the African Christian scholar and the perennial religions and spiritualities of Africa". Adrian Hastings, *African Christianity: An Essay in Interpretation*, London & Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1976, p. 51.

The particular history through which a church passes is, I want to suggest, a crucible within which a viable theology can be formed. As the attempt is made to ground Christian faith in the vernacular life of the communities in which it is making its home, the referent is not only the indigenous language and culture of the Christian community but also its indigenous history. The particular history through which it has passed, the crises it has met and the response it has offered have acted to form a robust and well-defined identity. Theology rising from this history will not lack roots in real experience.

Perhaps the hesitation of African theologians to draw on history as a source for theological construction stems from a sense that the churches have been formed by "someone else's history," and that therefore it is a foreign and alienating point of reference. Yet, by now, many African church movements have themselves passed through a rich and challenging history. This offers to the theologian material that is wholly indigenous, deeply rooted in the life of the people, and calling for the discernment of the work of the Spirit of God. It avoids the trap of inculturating the gospel into the culture of a bygone age and attempts an authentic indigenisation through constant reference to the concrete experience of the believing community. The turning to Christ of a particular community is examined in the context of social change and crisis, which ensures that the resultant theology is true to the experience of the local community.

To lay the foundation for theology to engage with history, it is necessary first for the history to be put in place. That means research to unfold the history of particular churches and to discern the key issues around which their identity has taken shape. In Africa this means putting a focus on the areas which aroused most concern among African communities when they were considering the challenge of the Christian gospel: issues such as traditional marriage systems, kinship loyalties, rites of passage, social clubs, traditional medicine, oracles and festivals. It places the Christian community in the wider context of the economic, social and political currents that were shaping the times. It has to enter a highly contested field where the ambiguous and sometimes damaging effects of Christian-

ity in Africa have to be taken seriously into account.⁹ It is when all this is worked through at the local level that the materials begin to emerge for the making of a theology that answers to the empirical reality in which people live their lives.

The importance of earthing theology in the concrete histories of particular communities is that it is then so much better able to take account of today's history. When a time of crisis comes or particular local issues have to be addressed there is no huge unbridgeable gulf between the theological discourse of the church and the empirical reality with which people are faced. Equally it is equipped to generate the theological resources needed to address great historical movements such as those of globalisation or militarisation which we face today; or such great contemporary African issues as nation-building, governance, food security and economic development. Already theology has been engaged with such matters as they have arisen in the historical experience of particular people. Thus it is poised to engender the prophetic word that brings transformation when a fresh crisis has to be faced.¹⁰

Engaging with the Other

Another problem I detect in much of the theological discourse is its rather self-enclosed character. There are many fine exceptions to this but I have the impression that quite a lot of theological writing and teaching has not arisen out of an in-depth engagement with others – with those who come with the tools of other disciplines or who stand quite outside the Christian community. Rather than an open, transparent and broadly engaged discourse, it has sometimes struck me that the process of theological education is more akin to initiation into a mystery religion. Knowledge is understood as power and progress is a matter of entering ever deeper into an esoteric discourse that has ever less connection with the wider context but bestows power to the holder within the particular community of the church. Have we forgotten that the gospel is, in Lesslie

⁹ See further Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "Christianity in a Distressed Africa: A Time to Own and to Own Up," *Missionalia*, Vol. 26/3 (November 1998), pp. 324-340.

¹⁰ See further Kenneth R. Ross, "Doing Theology with a New Historiography," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 99 (November 1997), pp. 94-98.

Newbigin's words, an "*open secret*"?¹¹ Have we rather used knowledge acquired through theological education as a means of securing and maintaining power – power, for example, of men over women, or clergy over laity, or the elderly over the youth? These may be painful questions but they have to be faced.

If theology is to be open to all then it means that the construction of theology has to be undertaken with a wide range of participants and dialogue partners. Let other disciplines bring their questions and offer their insights. Insist on the voices of women and young people being heard in the conversation. Listen to the others who stand outside of Christian faith yet share in the context and in the struggles of the community. In particular, draw into the conversation that other great faith community whose adherents span the continent. As Leonard Barlotti has written: "Islam represents the challenge of the Other, the Samaritan who is theologically near and far, both open and closed."¹² An open and contextualised African Christian theology is going to be characterised by engagement at a deep level with the challenge of Islam.

Here it is worth heeding the words of John Pobee who observes that: "For a healthy perspective on religious pluralism, we must learn to encounter the religions not as rival institutions and doctrines, but as attracting human persons also created by the same God but who nevertheless have different faith commitments, and engaging them and their insights with humility and respect. The notion of the humanity of the other must never be lost."¹³ This is actually what happens on the ground in the concrete experience of many African communities but it has somehow often failed to be reflected in the formal theological discourse. The shared life and common discourse that is apparent in many an African village where both Christianity and Islam are present needs to be taken up and reflected into formal theological education. This is necessary for

¹¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, my italics.

¹² Leonard N. Barlotti, "Open Access in Closed Societies: Theological Education in Muslim Contexts," *Transformation*, Vol. 18/2 (April 2001), p. 99.

¹³ John S. Pobee, "Ecumenical Formation in the Service of a Renewed Church," *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 53 No. 3 (2001), p. 326.

the sake of a socially responsible theology for these two great sections of the African community have to find ways to forge common understanding and initiate united action for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. It also gives an opportunity for the renewal of theology because it gives it a new addressee. As Alexander Malik of Pakistan points out: "Confessing of Christ in an Islamic context means our Christology – indeed, every element of theology – ought to be developed within an Islamic religio-socio-cultural situation and addressed to it."¹⁴ Taking theology to that missionary frontier will be good for it. It also opens up a possibility for a new kind of engagement between Christianity and Islam, one which is no longer haunted by the crusades and the tensions between western Europe and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ "It is in Africa," suggested Kwame Bediako, "that Christianity and Islam meet each other on something approaching an equal footing, and where each has been shaped, to varying degrees, by the primal religions and by the primal imagination."¹⁶ There is space in Africa for Christian-Muslim encounter that recognises in a new way the commonality and kinship of the two faiths as well as the points of mutual critique and challenge. Certainly, one of the adventures that beckons for Christian theology is a much closer engagement with Islam, the "other who is both near and far".

Engaging with the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

There is no need in a forum like this one to explain the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the African situation today. It is cutting short the lives of children and young adults on an unprecedented scale – the statis-

¹⁴ Alexander J. Malik, "Confessing Christ in the Islamic Context," in R.S. Sugirtharajah ed., *Asian Faces of Jesus*, New York: Orbis, 1993, p. 79.

¹⁵ David Kerr hints at what this might involve when he writes: "The future of Christian-Muslim relations requires a decolonization of the mind, and the creation of a new mental map in which Islam and Christianity increasingly co-exist in shared geographical, cultural, social and political space." David A. Kerr, "Islamic *Da'wa* and Christian Mission: Towards a Comparative Analysis," *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXIX No. 353 (April 2000), p. 164.

¹⁶ Kwame Bediako, "A Half Century of African Christian Thought: Pointers to Theology and Theological Education in the Next Half Century," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 3/1 (June 2000), p. 10.

tics do not have to be repeated. These losses to the community – each one loved, each one precious – have inevitably had a traumatic effect on the whole community. The Mulanje Mission Hospital medical director Bram Sizoo spoke in 2002 of Malawi as being on the verge of "social chaos and total breakdown".¹⁷ Tinyiko Maluleke has stated: "HIV/AIDS is not just a virus that afflicts individual human bodies. It is a condition of life – a condition in which millions of Africans find themselves whether their individual bodies are HIV positive or not. In this condition, people live in fear, suspicion and great insecurity."¹⁸ Taking account of this context, we have to reckon with Maluleke's question: "How can theological education in Africa be conducted in a 'business-as-usual' manner when thousands and millions of Africans are dying of HIV/AIDS?"¹⁹ The fact that so little progress has been made in developing curriculum that takes the epidemic fully into account, suggests that theologians and theological institutions have shared in the "denial" with which both people and politicians have often initially responded to the onset of large-scale incidence of HIV/AIDS. However, we are by now aware that attempting to ignore the disease is one of the factors which allows it to spread most rapidly.

In his important book *God in AIDS*, Ronald Nicolson observes that "every now and then something comes along which changes the way we think about everything" and suggests that the AIDS pandemic is in this category.²⁰ This means that the encounter with the impact of the epidemic is a formative moment for Christian theology. Here in Africa is an opportunity for Christian theology to go somewhere it has never been before, to engage with questions of theodicy, of mortality, of sexuality which have never before been focussed in this particular way. Consider two examples of areas of theology that are cast in a new light through this encounter.

¹⁷ Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2002*.

¹⁸ Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "The Challenge of HIV/AIDS for Theological Education in Africa: Towards an HIV/AIDS Sensitive Curriculum," *Missionalia* Vol. 29/2 (August 2001), p. 138.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 129.

²⁰ Ronald Nicolson, *God in AIDS*, London: SCM, 1996, p. 1.

The epidemic challenges the Christian understanding of creation and redemption. There is a theological journey to be made to reassert the Christian conviction that every human being, without exception, is created in the image of God and is loved by God so much that he sent the Son into the world. There is a need to address those who are stigmatised on account of their HIV-positive status with the good news of a Saviour who has taken away our stigma by taking it on himself. There is need to hold out the strong hope that none of the ravages of AIDS can ever cancel out the image of God in the sufferers nor do they ever go beyond the reach of God's love. In the last stages of their illness AIDS sufferers may be blind, incontinent and demented yet the love of God, Creator and Redeemer, is strong enough to be with them in that dark valley. Even in torment and abandonment we can find comfort and hope through the crucified Christ who "loved us and gave himself for us". The church has a special calling to teach and to live this message amidst the catastrophe.

To think of what the church is in the context of the epidemic is to remember that to belong to the church of Jesus Christ, is to be part of a body where "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it." What a source of strength this is in time of need! At the same time, it lays upon each of us a responsibility "not to look only to our own interests but also to the interests of others". In the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, it means that no member of the church can be unaffected as so many brothers and sisters are infected with the virus. If one has AIDS, we all have AIDS. The virus has infected our body. It is a crisis that involves the whole membership of the church. "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ."

The onslaught of the epidemic has also revealed gaps in the church's theology. It has to be acknowledged that the church has usually found it very difficult to name the issues raised by HIV/AIDS. In particular, the whole area of sexual health and fulfilment is one which has often been excluded from the worship and teaching of the church. Participants at a Global Consultation on the Ecumenical Response to the Challenge of HIV/AIDS in Africa held in Nairobi in November 2001 observed that: "As the pandemic has unfolded, it has exposed fault lines that reach to the heart of our theology, our ethics, our liturgy and our practice of ministry. Today, churches are being obliged to acknowledge that we have – how-

ever unwittingly – contributed actively and passively to the spread of the virus. Our difficulty in addressing issues of sex and sexuality has often made it painful for us to engage, in any honest and realistic way, with issues of sex education and HIV prevention. Our tendency to exclude others, our interpretation of the scriptures and our theology of sin have all combined to promote the stigmatisation, exclusion and suffering of people with HIV or AIDS. This has undermined the effectiveness of care, education and prevention efforts and inflicted additional suffering on those already affected by the HIV. Given the extreme urgency of the situation, and the conviction that the churches do have a distinctive role to play in the response to the epidemic, what is needed is a rethinking of our mission, and the transformation of our structures and ways of working."²¹

Rethinking is the task of theology and here is a challenge that cannot be shirked if African theological institutions are to offer Africa today the service it requires. Just as HIV/AIDS is eating at the heart of every community in the highly affected areas, so the issues it raises must be brought to the heart of the theological curriculum. This is not a matter of an additional course or a new section in the pastoral theology programme. No, it is a matter of so teaching biblical studies and systematic theology and church history that these disciplines are brought to bear on the question which day and night fills the minds of students and teachers alike: how to cope with the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic? To do less will be to fail in our responsibility to the community. But to accept this challenge and engage with it is to open up the possibility of a significant renewal of Christian theology for it has to face very sharp questions which, though painful at first, may render in the end a more mature and balanced and faithful understanding of that which is given to us in Jesus Christ.

Three areas of tension that call for creative development will now be considered.

²¹ "Plan of Action: The Ecumenical Response to HIV/AIDS in Africa," World Council of Churches Global Consultation on the Ecumenical Response to the Challenge of HIV/AIDS in Africa," Nairobi, Kenya, 25-28 November 2001, p. 2.

Indigenization and Catholicity

A perennial tension in the Christian faith is that between the local and the global. For Christianity has a built-in drive to become truly rooted in the local situation wherever it goes – that is the logic of the incarnation. Yet no Christian community can ever allow itself to be entirely absorbed by the local for it is ever aware that, ultimately, it is the citizen of another country and that as it journeys to that promised land it travels with an ecumenical accountability which connects it with a wider global community. This tension has been particularly marked in Africa since cultural alienation was such a marked feature of the reception of the gospel. Hence always pushing to the top of the theological agenda has been the question of indigenization – how to bring together African identity and Christian identity so that Africans can have integrity and wholeness in their profession of the faith. Yet at the same time it has been part of the appeal of Christianity in Africa that it enables Africans to come with all their gifts into a global community of faith.

How then is African Christian theology to relate to the wider discourse of the worldwide church? Or, to put the question institutionally, how can the seminaries and theological colleges of Africa be related in a healthy way to the Christian communion in the wider world? David Clement Scott was a Scottish missionary active in southern Malawi just over 100 years ago who developed an approach that may still have value in meeting the challenge of indigeneity and catholicity. His fundamental approach to mission in Africa comes through in the following lines, written in 1895: "We must beware of woodenness in our development of African Life. To attempt to force on Africa the details of Church life and organisation at home is we believe fatal to true growth. African life must be met in its own way, and it will grow on its own lines.... We have said it again and again, and we repeat *ad nauseam* that the African has got his own gift of Life and Work to present to the Catholic Church."²² This powerful vision of an African Christianity that would enrich the world was balanced, however, by a realisation that nothing less than the fullness of the catholic tradition was the proper inheritance of the African church as it forged its identity. As Andrew Ross remarks in his study of Scott: "[He] firmly

²² *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, September 1895.

believed that the task of the mission was to produce a Church that would be African. This could only be if the whole wealth of the Christian past was brought before the African people, from which they then could select the materials for their own building."²³ Perhaps Scott would have appreciated the comment of Kwame Bediako that "the African Christian story is necessarily part of the unfolding of Christian history as a whole and may not be made exotic so that it appears to have no analogues anywhere else".²⁴

After 100 years, and in greatly altered circumstances and conditions, this perspective still reveals the proper role of outside agencies and partners in the theological task in Africa. Of course, they have their limitations and by now it is clear to all that the task of theological construction in Africa will be taken forward by African theologians. But they will do this most effectively in an ecumenical context when they have the opportunity to test their findings against the experience of the church in other times and places. In concrete terms this means that there remains a place for overseas partners in African theological institutions – so long as they have the modesty and sensitivity to recognise where their proper role lies. And there remains a place for churches and agencies which have a commitment to journey with the African church as it coins the theological language and constructs the epistemological and dogmatic frameworks within which it will express its faith in Jesus Christ.

One point at which the tension between indigenization and catholicity finds expression is in the difficulties of research and publication in the African situation. Besides the general pressures of lack of resources and heavy demands on able people, the strength of oral culture is also a factor. Whereas ecumenical accountability calls for publication in a widely accessible language, indigenization calls for a deep engagement with the community in the vernacular at the local level. Only a very few theologians have managed to be true to both sides of this calling. Many have simply been absorbed by their own local context, perhaps doing wonderful work there but not able to make it accessible to a wider community.

²³ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, p. 146.

²⁴ Kwame Bediako, "The African Renaissance," p. 30.

Others have entered fully into the Western academy and have been prolific in writing and publishing but at the cost of becoming ever more distanced from their roots in Africa. It is important that structures be evolved to enable theological educators to be true to both sides of this calling – to be organic intellectuals intimately involved in the life and the struggles of their particular community yet participating in the global theological conversation. Ensuring that this is not an "either ... or" but rather a "both ... and" is a challenge to be faced by any concerned with the structuring of theological education and the formation of theological educators. In this context the creation of opportunities for research, writing and publishing will be one of the key planks in the platform on which viable theological education can be built.

Concentration and Diffusion

Another key area of tension in the development of African theological education is that between depth and width. Do you concentrate energy on educating a few people to a very high level or a large number of people to a much more limited level? Do you aim to create an elite corps of theological leaders or a mass movement of people's theologians? Up until now we have tended to lean in the former direction. The development of seminaries that will train the elite leaders has been the project to which the lion's share of resources have been devoted. While the importance of extension programmes has often been acknowledged, more often than not these have remained cinderella organisations – ill-resourced, not fully owned by the churches and struggling to attract and retain talented staff. Here I would add my voice to those of many others who have pointed out how heavily the African church on the ground depends on its local lay leadership and what a difference to the quality of worship and discipleship can be made by equipping such leaders with even a very minimal theological education. It is somewhat ironic that Protestant denominations with their theology of the priesthood of all believers are sometimes the most enthusiastic in dedicating all efforts in theological education to the creation of a priestly caste, ignoring the potential of the great majority of church leaders who will never be ordained into the clergy.

It is also necessary to observe that, by and large, the seminaries have been preserves of male power and even today the admission of women

is often grudging and limited. Yet go to the church in any village and you can be almost sure that it will be women who are at the heart of the task of nurturing the community of faith. Of course, ordination of women is a crucial battlefield yet this must not be divorced from the wider question of creating a structure of theological education which is geared to equipping for service the vast army of gifted women who are the mainstay of the church in the parish. Nor should we forget another vast neglected constituency – the young people who form such a large proportion of any African community. How often they have been given the impression that theological education is something beyond their reach – they have to wait until they are married and have at least a few grey hairs before they could even contemplate entering the portals of theological education. How different would the structure of theological education look if it was geared to ensure that every young person growing up in the life of the church would have opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, the theological task. What strength might there be in the African church if every one of its young members had begun to think of a steady growth in theological understanding as being part of their vocation as a Christian? Added to all the other reasons for promoting the participation of women and young people in theological education is now the imperative of addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic – from that challenge we exclude women and youth only to our peril.²⁵

So there is a need to open out the whole process of theological education and enable it to be repossessed by the whole people of God as its rightful heritage. At the same time history cautions us against committing to diffusion to the exclusion of any concentration of resources and expertise. Whenever the Christian movement has entered upon a time of renewal and reconstruction, strategic centres have emerged which gave a lead to the whole. To bring together some of the finest minds and to gather an abundance of resources in certain key centres, perhaps one or

²⁵ Willem Saayman, a pioneer AIDS theologian in South Africa, has stated that: "if we South African Christians do not allow and indeed facilitate women Christians to take the lead in the campaign against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, our dream of a shalomatic victory over this powerful idol of death, which so terribly diminishes the humanity of us all, will be in vain." Willem Saayman, "AIDS – Still Posing an Unanswered Question," *Missionalia*, Vol. 27/2 (August 1999), p. 218.

two in each region, can provide an engine of creative thought that energises and informs the whole movement. It may be that equipping the whole people of God and the cultivation of strategically placed centres of excellence are not incompatible objectives but that the one could serve the other. However, for this to be achieved the centres of excellence must understand themselves not as exclusive power bases to serve a chosen constituency nor as bastions of denominational prestige but rather as servants called to stimulate, enable and equip the whole people of God for its life and witness.

Academic Integrity and Ministerial Formation

It is important for theological education in Africa to have academic integrity. Without sound academic standards and strong research capacity, theological institutions will flounder as they seek to meet the challenges of innovation and reconstruction. There is a need for centres of documentation, the patient, enduring effort that is needed to cultivate original research, the rigorous thought that comes from determined scholarly formation, and the elegant writing which communicates with maximum precision and to the greatest possible effect. These are all elements of the toolkit that equips African theology for its task. Yet it is necessary to remember that the primary accountability of African theology is not to the criteria of a Western-oriented academy. I was reminded recently that many years ago the Dutch missiologist Johannes Verkuyl remarked that African theology is "not primarily an intra-ecclesiastical exercise, but a discipline whose practitioners keep one question central: How can we best do our theology so that the gospel will touch Africans most deeply?"²⁶ Perhaps that is a question which needs to be revisited in the light of the realities of today's Africa – the increasing poverty, the breakdown of social order, the crisis in governance, the ravages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the salience of Christian-Muslim encounter. It is in equipping the church to minister in face of these realities that theological education finds its deepest accountability. As it does so, it may well discover a deeper academic integrity that in turn will challenge the Western Univer-

²⁶ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p. 277.

sities with their individualism, excessive specialisation and dangerous alliance with the corporate world.

It is time for innovation - for rediscovering old ways and opening up new paths in the structure, content and method of theological education. Kwame Bediako recalled the ancient African vision and model of theological training, as espoused by the likes of Antony in the Egyptian desert or Origen in the catechetical school at Alexandria: "the model of theological education was the quest for holiness and moral transformation within the student, who would then also become a model for others seeking their own liberation."²⁷ Nyambura Njoroge shows the importance of "everyday God-talk" and, in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, "calls on the village to fashion its own theological discourse, which will motivate everyone to articulate life-affirming words, words that speak healing and wholeness to all who are afflicted and condemned to death".²⁸ Andrew Walls conjures up the Indian model of the ashram: "where seekers after truth came together to live a simple common life of study and meditation.... It is the scholarship of the Christian ashram, not of the ivory tower, that will have to keep theological scholarship alive in the twenty-first century."²⁹ All of these are suggestive images and all are underlining the need to think in new ways and to renew the inherited structures in order to fashion theological education which will meet its primary responsibility to ministerial formation and at the same time have all the qualities of true scholarship.

What theological education for Africa today? I am looking for theological education which crosses new frontiers through engagement with history, with "the other" and with the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and which works its way through the tensions between indigenization and catholicity, between concentration and diffusion, and between academic

²⁷ Kwame Bediako, "The African Renaissance and Theological Reconstruction," p. 32.

²⁸ Nyambura J. Njoroge, "Come Now, Let Us Reason Together," *Missionalia* Vol. 29/2 (August 2001), p. 254.

²⁹ Andrew F. Walls, "Of Ivory Towers and Ashrams: Some Reflections on Theological Scholarship in Africa," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 3/1 (June 2000), p. 4.

integrity and ministerial formation. The more that these are evident, the more Africa will have the theological education which she deserves and the more able she will be to bring her distinctive contribution to the whole church's understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what it means to follow him.

Whither the West?

22. Old Churches and New Evangelism: Christian Mission in Today's Europe

Outsiders coming to worship in the traditional churches of Europe are frequently struck by a sense of their old age. The church buildings are often ancient and magnificent, the worship is marked by a time-honoured tradition, a sense of permanence, a sense of being part of the fabric of the life of the community. But the people also seem old – it is grey heads and bald heads which are scattered around the pews. There is an absence of youth and a suspicion that the mainstream of society is no longer to be found in the life of the churches. The message that, with periodic adjustments to its form of delivery, has been received with joy for a millennium and a half, no longer captures the popular imagination. When Fergus Macdonald carried out field research on the religious and spiritual attitudes of Edinburgh University students in 2003, he found that "the most widespread impression of the churches is that they are old-fashioned".¹ It is difficult to dispute Duncan Forrester's conclusion that "religious language and symbols seem to many to be tired, jaded, jejune and esoteric".² It seems that the church has lost the place. Christians from younger churches who come to Europe and encounter their "mother" church are embarrassed to discover that the old woman has grown very feeble. In fact, she appears to be getting confused and is becoming a worry to her children. Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon aptly observe: "Like an aging dowager, living in a decaying mansion on the edge of town, bankrupt and penniless, house decaying around her but acting as if her family still controlled the city, our theologians and church leaders continued to think and act as if we were in charge, as if the old arrangements were still valid."³

¹ Fergus Macdonald, "Cool Kerygma: Making Preaching Relevant in the Twenty-First Century," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 21/2 (2003), pp. 131-151 [132].

² Duncan B. Forrester, "The Political Service of Theology in Scotland," in William Storrar and Peter Donald ed., *God in Society: Doing Social Theology in Scotland Today*, Edinburgh, St Andrew Press, 2003, pp. 83-121 [113].

³ Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Duncan B. 29.

While there are lively churches and Christian youth movements to be found throughout Europe, there is no escaping the conclusion that, overall, there is rapid decline in participation in the life of the church. This is recognised even by recent works that argue that Europe's rejection of organised religion is not as complete or as final as is often assumed.⁴ General impressions and anecdotal evidence are substantiated by statistical studies. To take the case of Scotland as an example, a Church Census was undertaken in 1984, in 1994 and again in 2002. So it is possible to set out current trends with a reasonable degree of objectivity. On the day of the Census in 1984, 853,700 people attended a church service, in 1994 the total was 691,120 and in 2002 it was 570,130 – just 11.2% of the population.⁵ This represents a decline in church attendance of 19% in the ten years between 1984 and 1994 and a decline of 18% in the eight years between 1994 and 2002. Between 1984 and 1994 the average annual decline was 2.1% while between 1994 and 2002 it increased to 2.4%, indicating that the rate of decline in church attendance is accelerating. The membership of the Church of Scotland, the national church, has been declining by between 15,000 and 19,000 per year since the 1960s. Its Board of National Mission has pointed out that: "it is projected that if this continues the Church of Scotland, as we know it today, will have ceased to exist by the year 2050".⁶

Here is a church not only facing the discomforts of old age but the prospect that it is, in fact, on its deathbed. "At least in its institutional form....," remarks Philip Jenkins, "European Christianity seems to be terminally ill".⁷ Of course, the reality is much more complex and varied than the overall statistics might suggest. Nevertheless, we ignore them at our

⁴ See e.g. Grace Davie, *Europe: the Exceptional Case. Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002; Philip Jenkins, *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

⁵ Peter Brierley, *Turning the Tide: The Challenge Ahead*, Report of the 2002 Scottish Church Census, London: Christian Research, 2003, pp. 15-16.

⁶ Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2002*, Edinburgh, Church of Scotland, 2002, p. 20/6.

⁷ Philip Jenkins, *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 26.

peril. Church leaders have taken heart from the answers to the religion question in the 2001 UK Population Census when 72% of the population opted to describe themselves as "Christian". However, since less than 10% attend church regularly, Peter Brierley has pointed out that "there is an obvious yawning gap between profession and commitment in terms of church attendance".⁸ A religious heritage is acknowledged but this does not lead to participation in public worship or active Christian discipleship.

It appears to many that we are entering a period when Christian faith has become peripheral, sectarian, and irrelevant to the construction of reality in which the European population is engaged. In his satire of the early years of the new Scottish Parliament, novelist Christopher Brookmyre notes the high profile sometimes given to church leaders in public debate but makes the comment: "Why, some were asking ... were reporters including these quotes in their articles at all? What other minority groups enjoyed such a disproportionate lobby as the Kirk and Chapel, that their views could be admitted – even invited – into so many influential forums, despite their dwindling numbers?... 'Who do the churches really represent?' was the question that was being more and more frequently asked, and by which the questioners really meant 'how many'".⁹ No wonder that Wilbert Shenk has concluded that: "The message of the church has increasingly lost credibility in that part of the world that has been its 'homeland' for some fifteen hundred years. Today it finds itself in an increasingly marginal position".¹⁰

"The storm buffeting the churches is very serious indeed," writes Loren Mead of the Alban Institute, "Much more serious than we have admitted to ourselves, and much more serious than our leaders have yet comprehended.... The storm is so serious, I believe, that it marks the end of 'business as usual' for the churches and marks the need for us to begin

⁸ Peter Brierley, ed., *UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends No. 4*, London: Christian Research, 2003, pp. 2-3.

⁹ Christopher Brookmyre, *Boiling a Frog*, London: Abacus, 2000, pp. 110, 151.

¹⁰ Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999, p. 118.

again building the church from the ground up".¹¹ In this chapter, the attempt will be made to identify points from which Christian witness might "begin again". The situation in Scotland will be taken as a case study and particular reference will be made to a Report entitled "Church Without Walls" produced by a Church of Scotland Special Commission that was tasked to consider how the Church might be reformed and renewed for mission in the 21st century. It will make no pretence to provide a comprehensive answer to the profound questions being asked of the churches at this time. But it will aim to identify points of connection where traction might be found for a renewed engagement of European communities with the Christian gospel.

Church and Society: New Dynamics

Mission in Europe has been understood over the centuries on a very broad basis. Besides worship and Christian education, the church has been integrally involved in shaping the whole life of the community, seeking to minister to people's needs in every dimension of life. This led to large-scale church-based engagement in education, poor relief and the pursuit of social justice. With the modern era, the state has increasingly taken responsibility for such provision. It should be acknowledged that churches continue to offer diaconal service to the community, including innovative and pioneering projects. An independent study of the social capital generated by Church of Scotland congregations recently concluded that, "... wider messages of declining Church membership and influence disguise the crucial role played by many congregations in local communities, including the establishment of a significant number of new community organisations, premises, facilities and services."¹² Nonetheless, much the greater part of social services are provided by the state and the witness of the church aims to shape the public provision in accordance with Christian values. Due to the very long period of time in which the churches took the lead in working for development in society, the secular provision made today is still marked, to a greater or lesser

¹¹ Cit. Church of Scotland Special Commission, *Church Without Walls: Report to the General Assembly 2001*, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Parish Education Publications, 2001, p. 20.

¹² Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2002*, p. 25/21.

degree, by the values of the gospel. For example in Scotland, when commenting on the first four years of the revived Scottish Parliament (1999-2003), the Churches Parliamentary Officer Graham Blount noted that: "... a legacy of 'cultural Presbyterianism', in the form of a commitment to social justice, is at the heart of the parliament's and perhaps the nation's agenda...."¹³ Wherever such a legacy is to be found, it offers capital with which churches can work as they seek the good of the community as a whole.

Debate about the "legacy" derived from Christian influence on European history has recently found a focus in discussions about the constitution of the European Union. Scarred by the experience of religious wars in earlier centuries, Western European nations are inclined to advocate a strictly secular constitution. The east European countries now being admitted to the Union, on the other hand, tend to seek explicit acknowledgement of the Christian basis of the inherited culture and social order. Some churches have been critical because the constitution contains no explicit acknowledgement of Christianity, nor any direct mention of God. However, for the first time, a preamble to a European Union Treaty states explicitly that it draws inspiration from Europe's 'religious' inheritance. This gives a point of reference for churches seeking to introduce particular concerns that arise from evangelical witness at any given point. Though at the present time the influence of Christian values is largely residual, it is a reality and offers a point of contact for contemporary Christian witness. Alastair Hulbert argues that "a theology of insistence" (rather than a theology of resistance) is what is needed for mission to institutions in the European context.¹⁴

At the same time, it is necessary to recognise the advent of pluralistic societies in Europe, where no special status or privilege is accorded to the Christian faith. Today's challenge is to adapt to the new experience of being simply one voice among many. This need involves neither being

¹³ Graham K. Blount, "A New Voice in a New Land?" in William Storrar and Peter Donald eds., *God in Society: Doing Social Theology in Scotland Today*, Edinburgh, St Andrew Press, 2003, pp. 36-49 [47].

¹⁴ Alastair Hulbert, "Theology of Insistence: An Ecumenical Perspective," in Storrar and Donald, *God in Society*, p. 226-31 [228].

silent nor being timid. "Being on the margins," Keith Clements reminds us, "does not mean that we and the political decision-makers are out of earshot of each other."¹⁵ As Duncan Forrester has argued: "with the recognition that Christendom has passed away beyond recall, there remains an urgent need for a post-Christendom political theology ... not wistful but forward-looking and missionary, taking the political realm with profound seriousness, but never making it absolute."¹⁶ The overall shape and character of the society in which it is located remains an evangelical concern of the church. It cannot prescribe nor can it assume that the premises from which it argues will be universally accepted. But there is nothing to prevent it from entering the debate and bringing a Christian perspective to the issues of the day. Forrester suggests a possible approach: "Is a compelling task and opportunity today the bringing together of 'theological fragments' which have been illuminating, instructive or provocative in grappling with issues of practice 'on the ground', reflecting on them, and on their embeddedness in the structure of Christian faith, and enquiring whether this gives clues as to a constructive contribution in the public realm today? This may well be the way towards the renewal and recovery of Christian social vision in the conditions of today."¹⁷

While there is the need and the opportunity to remain engaged at the macro level in the shaping of European societies, there is also the call for the church to identify itself with those who are most excluded from power and prosperity. Keith Clements, former General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, has remarked: "If we Christians and churches feel ourselves to be on the margins of much European life, rather than that being a tragedy to be lamented it could be the point at which we discover our real vocation for our time, just as Bonhoeffer felt that for his circle 'the view from below' might be their most precious acquisition."¹⁸ As *Church Without Walls* puts it: "We stand accountable to

¹⁵ Keith Clements, "The Churches of Europe – 'Are We Still of Any Use?'" *Christians Aware*, Autumn 2001, p. 25.

¹⁶ Duncan Forrester, *Theology and Politics*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, p. 55.

¹⁷ Duncan Forrester, "The Political Service of Theology in Scotland," pp. 117-18.

¹⁸ Keith Clements, "The Churches of Europe – 'Are We Still of Any Use?'" *Christians Aware*, Autumn 2001, p. 28.

the poorest people of the land. If our reshaping of the Church does not give our God of love and justice a local face, then we have not touched the heart of God's covenant love."¹⁹ This leads us to the micro-level, to the *oikos*, to working again from the periphery. It takes us again to the impoverished, the drug addicts, the migrants, the sex workers, the refugees, the homeless. There is alienation and anomie in European societies that confounds the efforts of secular social services. Is this the place for the church to find a renewed drive for social development?

By being with those for whom globalization is not working, can the church ultimately challenge the injustice of the prevailing system with an inclusive model of social development? For many this means an uncomfortable journey. As Paulo Suess has written: "'Mission' in this perspective means 'exogamy', marriage outside one's own tribe.... This exogamy – the seeking of a bride outside one's own tribe, not in the New York or Tokyo stock market, but in the midst of the poor and the Others – is not an optional attitude, but a command of the Lord."²⁰ Taking its place among those most excluded and most alienated from the market that defines the modern world, the church finds a fresh frontier on which significant development work can be done. Rebuilding community where it has been fragmented and broken may be the distinctive contribution of the church to social development at this time. As *Church Without Walls* has expressed it: "The Church 'works' where people join together, building relationships with each other and the community to which they belong. It is through these relationships that the Gospel is spread."²¹ In an era when relationships are governed by the market and people are easily reduced to consumers, it may be that it is in offering a different kind of community based on a different understanding of the self that the church will act again as a source of social renewal. This means as another Church of Scotland report concluded: "The challenge is to the Church to examine the quality of its fellowship.... Are we prepared to venture into the 'open ground', seeking encounters with wider forms of human com-

¹⁹ Church of Scotland Special Commission 2001, p. 25.

²⁰ Paulo Suess, "The Gratuitousness of the Presence of Christ in the Broken World of Latin America," *Mission Studies* XVII (2000), pp. 68-81 [72].

²¹ Church of Scotland Special Commission 2001, p. 8.

munity in all their need, perhaps to find our own community deepened as prayer becomes more urgent, gifts are recognised and used, as members share more with each other – their flaws as well as their strengths."²²

For more than twenty years Malcolm Cuthbertson ministered in the Easterhouse area of Glasgow, a "housing scheme" parish where the great majority have been excluded from the growing affluence that has marked British life during this period.²³ 25% of householders are registered disabled, 25% of householders are single parents, unemployment rises as high as 70%, and male life expectancy is just 63 years. Schools suffer from non-attendance, there is high incidence of mental health problems and abuse of drink and drugs is commonplace. Less than 1% of the population attend any Christian church on a Sunday.

The gap between the life of the church and the life of the community is there for all to see. Malcolm observes that mission in his context has often involved attempts to persuade people to participate in a form of church life that is culturally alien to them. No validity is accorded to their existing religious experience. It is a *tabula rasa* approach that is employed, working on the basis that there is nothing of any value that the community can bring to the expression of Christian faith. Appropriating Christian faith is all about acceding to norms that are imported from elsewhere (generally from suburban, middle-class congregational life). However, Malcolm claims that in twenty years he has "never met an atheist in Easterhouse". Almost everyone has a spirituality, rooted in what might be called "folk religion". This finds expression in such organisations as the Masonic Lodge or Orange Order and in participation in such Christian rites of passage as funerals, "christenings" and weddings. Malcolm's conviction is that the mission of the church could find real vitality if existing religious belief and practice were taken seriously as the base on which authentic Christian faith might be built. If there is a risk of syncretism and "chaos," then that is a risk which must be taken in order to promote the discovery of a Christian faith which is earthed in the experience of the people.

²² Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2002*, p. 13/8.

²³ Interview with Rev Malcolm Cuthbertson, 29 September 2003.

A faith that is cerebral and a witness that is wordy will always be inaccessible to the poor of Easterhouse. Aptly Philip Turner describes "the powerlessness of talking heads" when assessing postmodern Western culture.²⁴ "Re-evangelization," he remarks, "requires more than words. It requires as well an alternative way of life."²⁵ Where the poor can respond is when the faith is expressed in terms of action. After extensive engagement with people in London communities, Roy Williamson, former Anglican Bishop of Southwark, remarked: "If those outside the church are saying anything to us at all, it is 'Don't tell me, show me'."²⁶ Likewise in Easterhouse, often it is receiving practical care that stimulates a response. Conversion expresses itself in people turning from absorption in their own problems to reach out to others around them. It is through unselfish commitment to community development that Christian discipleship takes effect. Commenting on conversions in the early church, George Lindbeck remarks: "Pagan converts to the catholic mainstream did not, for the most part, first understand the faith and then decide to become Christians; rather, the process was reversed: they first decided and then they understood. More precisely, they were first attracted by the Christian community and form of life."²⁷ It seems that a similar pattern may apply in Europe today. Malcolm believes that practical care will be one of the defining characteristics of the church that emerges in a context like Easterhouse. Another will be the note of celebration. The poor have so much adversity to face that times of joy and happiness are highly valued. It is through a high level of commitment to community development that ways are found to make known the reality of Jesus Christ.

²⁴ Philip Turner, "The Powerlessness of Talking Heads: Re-evangelization in a Postmodern World – The Place of Ethics," in Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen eds., *The Strange New Word of the Gospel: Re-evangelising in the Postmodern World*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, pp. 73-93, at p. 73.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²⁶ Simon Barrow, "From Management to Vision: Issues for British Churches Negotiating Decline and Change," *International Review of Mission*, XCII/364 (2003), pp. 7-17 [15].

²⁷ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984, p. 132.

In developing this community-oriented approach to Christian mission, Malcolm is attracted by the proposal of Korean theologian Kyo-Seong Ahn that, in contrast to the orthodoxy and orthopraxis which have characterized earlier periods of missionary engagement, today what is required is "orthopathy". This involves proclaiming the genuine truth "not from the head, not from the hand, but from the heart". Its keynotes are: "relationship, emotional intelligence, symbiosis, community, interdependence, pathos and *Missio Hominis*". This pathos-oriented missiology "does not try to dictate or manipulate, but tries to respect others. What is indispensable in doing mission, is respect for the other human being, because with respect, a human being can keep his or her dignity in any situation.... Respect is the recognition of the dignity in the other human being. In this sense, it is cognitive love because it inchoates the love of the second great commandment: "love your neighbour as you love yourself". Through this love, it builds up community and gives priority to the relations."²⁸ On this understanding of the task of mission, the love that makes for community is at the same time the action of evangelism. *Church Without Walls* challenges us to "imagine the impact on a society where 'you tell me your truth and I'll tell you mine', if Christian people lived the difference by 'doing the truth' with compassion, courtesy and courage,"²⁹

Seeking a New Evangelism

By and large, the churches have been slow to accept that they occupy an increasingly marginal position in society. When faced with overwhelming evidence of the decline in Christian belief, Robin Gill observes that the dominant reaction on the part of the church leadership "has been to attempt to deny it" (2002:98).³⁰ Peter Neilson, principal author of the *Church Without Walls* Report, observes that even a statistical study which reveals remorseless church decline is entitled *Turning the Tide*. If you wait long enough, the tide always comes back in. This image suggests

²⁸ Kyo-Seong Ahn, "In Search of an Authentic Missiology: from Orthodoxy to Orthopraxis to Orthopathy," Towards 2010 Lecture, Edinburgh, April 2003.

²⁹ Church of Scotland Special Commission 2001, p. 18.

³⁰ Robin Gill, *Changing Worlds: Can the Church Respond?* London & New York: T. & T. Clark, 2002, p. 98.

that church life will inevitably return to what it was at high tide. In reality, Neilson suggests, the Spirit is flowing in a different river.³¹ An important first step in the recovery of effective evangelism is a realistic recognition that the alienation prevailing between church and society is so profound that it is time to begin again. *Church Without Walls* argues that:

congregations and the modern world exist as two separate worlds, sometimes overlapping and yet still clinging to their own perspectives. In a world where the big pictures are no longer viewed as adequate in themselves as patterns for living, the Church is tempted to retreat into the big picture inherited from previous centuries. In a world where structures are fluid and dynamic, the Church is drawn to the rigid ways that suited past generations. In a world where change is accepted and even welcomed in the name of technological advance, the Church resists and is threatened by change on many different levels.³²

Church Without Walls further notes the cultural gulf between church and society: "In the 'Friends' generation, young people are finding new places of community and belonging. The Church culture of formality, regulations, expectations and conformity sends out a corporate 'vibe' that makes today's generation instinctively uncomfortable."³³ Such a refusal to come to terms with contemporary reality cannot serve the mission of the church. On the contrary, the great need of the day is for a fresh missionary encounter with European society and culture.

Lesslie Newbigin used to quote the remark of General Simatoupong of Indonesia – "Of course, the number one question is: can the West be converted?"³⁴ The extent of the missionary challenge was outlined by Newbigin when he observed: "What we call the modern Western scientific worldview, the post-Enlightenment cultural world, is the most powerful and persuasive ideology in the world today. The Christian gospel continues to find new victories among the non-Western, pre-modern cultures of the world, but in the face of this modern Western culture the

³¹ Interview, Peter Neilson, 27 February 2004.

³² Church of Scotland Special Commission 2001, p. 61.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Mission*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, p. 66.

Church is everywhere in retreat. Can there be a more challenging frontier for the Church than that?"³⁵

It has to be acknowledged that the message of the gospel is not getting across in European societies, at least not in a way which draws people in significant numbers into church membership and active Christian discipleship. The institutions, the concepts and the idioms that have communicated the good news have become tired and jaded. In contrast to non-Western contexts where people receive the good news of Jesus Christ as the most exciting and liberating news they could possibly imagine, for a majority of Europeans today the gospel is a message which people comfortably feel that they can ignore. There is need to hear the gospel again, to listen to the good news of Jesus Christ as though hearing it for the first time. Yet, while many have sensed the need for this re-appropriation of the gospel, efforts to develop the "new evangelism" have met with only limited success. As David Smith comments: "... churches in the West seem to be in a liminal state; the old is dying and must be left behind, but it remains entirely unclear from our perspective just what we will become."³⁶ The primary task lying before the churches in Europe is that of finding the idiom in which to communicate the gospel, and the way of life that will incarnate the gospel in a fragmented and rootless society.

If there is one thing the Christian church should have learned from its long history, and particularly from the great age of expansion over the last two centuries, it is how to engage with a new cultural context. As David Smith has pointed out: "It should be possible for churches possessing two centuries of accumulated experience and expertise in cross-cultural missionary endeavour to discover faithful and creative ways of ensuring that Christ becomes a living option for a generation shaped by postmodern culture."³⁷ Among the lessons learned from this experience would be the confidence that Christ is translatable, that new language is not threat but opportunity, that there is need to take risks, to be ready

³⁵ Ibid, p. 67.

³⁶ David Smith, "Junction or Terminus? Christianity in the West at the Dawn of the Third Millennium," in Timothy Yates ed., *Mission – An Invitation to God's Future*, Calver: Cliff College, 2000, p. 97.

³⁷ Ibid.

for the Gospel to be seen in a new light, to be willing to let the terms be set by the "receptor" community. Much can be learnt from the insights of Vincent Donovan drawn from the African context: "While the general outline of the church is certainly present in scripture, the specific details of the church, the response to the good news, will just as certainly have to be as free and diverse as all the separate cultures of the human race."³⁸

In the missionary's experience of learning a new language and seeking to communicate the Gospel in that new language, there were invariably two stages.³⁹ The first was one of frustration, where the missionary was painfully aware of his or her inability to communicate the gospel message in accustomed terms. The second stage was the gloriously liberating one when the missionary realized that the new language was opening up all kinds of new insights into the meaning of the Gospel, sometimes turning received understandings upside down. To reach that second stage it was necessary for the missionary to enter deeply into the language and culture, to esteem it, to come to love it. Only through such experience will the faith be commended to the peoples of the West in the new cultural context into which they have entered. But you reach that stage only when you have the missionary sense of adventure that takes you to the vulnerability of a new place with the confidence that the Gospel of Christ can be translated into the native idiom.

Right on the doorstep of the church in Europe today there is a cultural gulf to be crossed, a new language into which to translate the gospel, a new missionary frontier to cross, a new idolatry to combat. It may ultimately be necessary to criticise a post-modern, relativistic, hedonistic culture from a Christian point of view but criticism should not be the first or the only approach to be taken. Just as the nineteenth-century missionaries had to learn, often the hard way, that the societies in which they found themselves were not all bad and that indeed they often had much to teach the missionary, so it will be a surprise if the postmodern

³⁸ Vincent Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*, London: SCM, 1982, pp. 81-82.

³⁹ I owe this thought to Kai Funkschmidt, who offered a reflection along these lines at the annual conference of the Churches Commission on Mission, Durham, September 2000.

Western societies do not possess features that will make possible a new, revealing, and energizing appropriation of the Gospel of Christ. Is not such a new cultural frontier one that excites the Christian imagination? The promise of this moment is expressed by David Smith when he writes: "... wherever the Gospel is transmitted across a cultural barrier the potential exists for the revelation of some quite new dimension of divine grace as Jesus comes to be known and loved in 'every nation, tribe, people and language'." ⁴⁰

Inverness High School serves the district of South Kessock, Merkinch and Dalneigh, an area of multiple deprivation in the UK's northernmost city. ⁴¹ Unsurprisingly it is a school which has languished at the foot of the "league tables" when it comes to academic results. On all available indicators it registers a high level of social exclusion. Disillusionment has prevailed among staff, students and community alike. In 2001, Iain Clyne, a teacher who works half-time for the school and half-time for Youth for Christ, with encouragement from the Headteacher, initiated the Street Space Project. By having a full-time Christian youth worker in the school, the aim has been to present the faith in an idiom accessible to the students and to begin a renewal movement based on encounter with Christ.

This initiative aroused significant interest among students and a movement emerged that centred around Christian worship and teaching, though in a format and idiom which culturally is quite different from the traditional church. Significantly, Iain Clyne took a Master's degree course at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology from 1995 to 1997. This introduced him to the struggle of African Christians to find an expression of the faith that is true to their culture. He sees the situation of the young people in Inverness High School as being similar – there is need for the faith to be translated into new terms that will make sense in the new culture which has emerged in the context of postmodernity and social exclusion.

⁴⁰ David Smith, *Mission After Christendom*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003.

⁴¹ Interview with Iain Clyne, 9 September 2003.

Through this encounter it has become clear that evangelism cannot be restricted to the emergence of an interior faith. It is integrally linked to the formation of gospel values that shape the whole life of the school community. This dimension of the project has led to links being made with the Community Action Network, a secular body that has attracted many Christians on to its staff. It has promoted the idea of partnership between different players in the school and community, including the faith-based movement within the school.

The vision is for the emergence of a new kind of church – more based on events than on settled structures, keeping open borders so that people move in and out quite freely. It is described by Iain Clyne as "relational, tactile, story-based, uninstitutional, differentiated, varied and flexible".⁴² But it is also a vision of a new kind of church that will be a force for renewal in a community which is seriously losing out and which has repeatedly been failed by entirely secular development models. It demonstrates the kind of re-emergence of Christianity that David Fergusson has described in these terms: "In a context of social fragmentation and moral disarray greater Christian authenticity becomes possible. Having faded from the social landscape, Christian faith emerges as something radically different and compelling."⁴³

The Rediscovery of the Church

Before the church can undergo such a transformation, it will need to shake off some of the self-image it has inherited from its many years of sitting comfortably at the centre of European life. It has to recognise that the Christendom model is no longer applicable. In the case of the Church of Scotland, it is still constitutionally bound by the Third Declaratory Article of 1921 – "As a National Church, representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people, it acknowledges its distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry." The *Church Without Walls* Report notes: "It was claiming to be the voice *of* the people rather than a voice *to* the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ David Fergusson, "Another Way of Reading Stanley Hauerwas," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50/2 (1997), pp. 242-49 [242].

people."⁴⁴ Having been able to presume upon the Christian faith of the community as a whole, it is time to re-position so as to be able to witness to the community as one voice among others.

Inevitably, having been part of the fabric of national life for many generations, the life of the church has become highly institutionalised. Today, far from its institutional identity serving a purpose in mission, it has become a significant hindrance. The words of Darrell Guder are very pertinent: "At every level of the church, we need to accept the basic fact that the maintenance of particular organisational expressions of the mission community is not the priority of our vocation to be Christ's witness. The church itself is not the goal of the gospel, but rather is called to be its witness and servant. This means that the continuation of all institutional forms of the church must take place under the scrutiny of the gospel and our missional vocation.... There is a profound difference between the reshuffling of bureaucracies ... and the missional renewal that transforms the church toward greater faithfulness in witness" (2000:199-200).⁴⁵ Theo Sundermeier offers a picture of what this rediscovery of the gospel might look like:

There was a time when the Heidelberg Castle was larger than the whole town and absolutely dominated the Neckar Valley. Certainly, it was good that in earlier wars (at the end of the 17th century) the castle was reduced to human scale and can be seen as fragile and no longer effective as a domineering gesture. But it is just as important that the most beautiful and central part has been reconstructed so that by both destruction and reconstruction the castle has become so attractive that it draws many people from all over the world by its aesthetic splendour.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Church of Scotland Special Commission 2001, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Darrell Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, Grand Rapids & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000, pp. 199-200.

⁴⁶ Theo Sundermeier, "Mission and Dialogue in a Pluralist Society," in Yates, *Mission – An Invitation to God's Future*, p. 39.

Lesslie Newbigin has convincingly argued that "the clue to evangelism in a secular society must be the local congregation;"⁴⁷ and that "... the only possible hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation which believes it."⁴⁸ Perhaps the primary argument of the *Church Without Walls* Report is the need to return the initiative to the local congregations. The Report lays down the challenge: "in a time when life is fragmented, congregations need to work more creatively at being real communities of faith. Without a Gospel community, there is no communication of the Gospel."⁴⁹ Peter Neilson, who chaired the Commission which produced the *Church Without Walls* Report, has summarised the required transformation in these terms:

In summary we are calling our church to a change of mindsets:

- From church focus to Christ focus
 - following Jesus to see what church forms round him.
- From settled church to church as a movement
 - going where people are rather than waiting for people to come.
- From a culture of guilt to a culture of grace
 - freeing people to risk and fail.
- From running congregations to building communities
 - working towards a relational reformation.
- From isolation to interdependence
 - encouraging churches to work together.
- From individualism to teamwork
 - seeing teamwork as essential to all ministry.
- From top down church to upside down church
 - putting the local church at the centre of the agenda.
- From centralised resources to development resources

⁴⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Mission*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, pp. 155-56.

⁴⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, London: SPCK, 1989, p. 232.

⁴⁹ Church of Scotland Special Commission 2001, p. 19.

- releasing funds to encourage local vision.
- From faith as security to faith as risk
- looking for new courage to break out of old routines.⁵⁰

At a previous time in European history when the mission of the church seemed to be faltering, a new evangelism led by the likes of Patrick, Brigid and Columba turned the situation around. In his book *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, Thomas Cahill observes that "no human group has ever figured out how to design its future. That future may be germinating today not in a boardroom in London or an office in Washington or a bank in Tokyo but ... in some unheralded corner where a great-hearted human being is committed to loving outcasts in an extraordinary way."⁵¹ In the development of monasticism in the centuries which followed, there was a constant need for renewal. Each successive new movement went out to "the wilderness" and found new energy on the margins of society. As this took effect, invariably it moved closer to the centre of society, to the centres of power and influence. There was then need for a new movement to strike out again into "the wilderness" and begin again to bear witness to the transforming power of the gospel. This seems to have been in the mind of Lesslie Newbigin when he commented in 1985: "We may even have to wait for another St Benedict to show us how to create the living cells for a new kind of body politic."⁵² It may be that it is time again for the church again to make its way out to the wilderness – to places like Easterhouse, South Kessock, Merkinch and Dalneigh. Taking its place among the outcasts it may rediscover the gospel and become again an agent of transformation in society.

⁵⁰ Peter Neilson, "The Church of Scotland – Seeking Reform and Renewal," unpublished internal paper, Church of Scotland, 2001.

⁵¹ Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe*, New York & London: Doubleday, 1995, p. 217.

⁵² Geoffrey Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 264-65.

23. *Together Towards Life* in the Context of Liquid Modernity: Mission and Evangelism in the Age of Secularization

When the World Council of Churches adopted its new affirmation on mission and evangelism, *Together Towards Life (TTL)*, in 2012, included in the subtitle was a reference to "changing landscapes".¹ This is a phrase that has resonance at many levels and in many contexts. People everywhere are conscious of the speed of change in our time and this takes effect in a great many different ways. The purpose of this chapter is to consider the new affirmation in light of the great change in Western culture often described in shorthand as "secularization".

Evidence abounds of a recession of Christian faith in the West. With minor local variations, there is an unmistakable trend: church attendance is in decline, numbers of baptisms are reducing, numbers of church weddings are reducing, numbers of church funerals are reducing. It has become perfectly possible to live one's life in western Europe without participation in, or even much awareness of, the Christian faith. The sharp decline in religious identity and participation is evidenced by innumerable surveys. The results of the 2011 Scottish Census, for example, show that those identifying themselves as "Church of Scotland" fell from 42% in 2001 to 32% in 2011. Meanwhile, those identifying themselves as "no religion" rose from 28% in 2001 to 37% in 2011.² How can we account for such changes?

Charles Taylor suggests that we have moved "from a condition in 1500 in which it was hard not to believe in God, to our present situation just after 2000, where this has become quite easy for many. A way of putting

¹ Jooseop Keum ed., *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2012.

² Scotland's Census 2011: Shaping our Future – Detailed Characteristics on Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion in Scotland, www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/news/census-2011-detailed-characteristics-ethnicity-identity-language-and-religion-scotland [20 March 2014].

our present condition is to say that many people are happy living for goals which are purely immanent; they live in a way that takes no account of the transcendent."³ Despite centuries of Christian influence on its culture, language, literature, architecture, politics and values, the great majority of western Europeans are opting to live with a frame of reference in which Christian faith has practically no place. As Reinhard Hempelmann observes: "We talk about 'inculturation' when the gospel finds a place in a certain cultural context. In our society today, Christian faith is in a stage of 'exculturation'"⁴ This presents a new, hitherto unexplored, frontier for Christian mission.

Lesslie Newbigin, a generation ago, was a pioneer in urgently drawing the attention of the churches to this new frontier that they now have to face. At a time when it was still widely assumed that the West was the "home base" of Christianity and that mission was something to be done elsewhere in the world, Newbigin demonstrated how far the tables had turned. For him, as a missionary returning from India to the UK in the 1970s it was a profoundly personal experience. He described his experience of ministry on return to England as, "much harder than anything I met in India. There is a cold contempt for the Gospel which is harder to face than any opposition ... England is a pagan society and the development of a truly missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the Church."⁵ This led him to pose what has proved to be the great unanswered mission question of our time: "What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking and living that we call 'modern Western culture'?"⁶

³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 143.

⁴ Reinhard Hempelmann, "The Context of Christian Witness in the 21st Century," *International Review of Mission* Vol. XCII/364 (2003), pp. 45-55 [47].

⁵ Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985, p. 249.

⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986, p. 1.

Thirty years later, there can be little doubt that there was accuracy and acuity to Newbigin's analysis. While there is a resurgence of religion worldwide, there is also an advance of secularism, particularly in the West but also making its mark wherever Western culture exercises influence. How far does the new WCC mission affirmation address this reality?

The New Frontier: Wider and Stronger

In assessing the context of the West, while acknowledging the prophetic quality of Newbigin's analysis, it is also necessary to recognize significant developments that have occurred since his time.

The frontier has strengthened

The secularizing trends identified by Newbigin in the 1980s have intensified during the subsequent decades. The strident voices of the "New Atheists" have enjoyed a high profile in the West. Scholars like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens have not only made the case for atheism but have powerfully made the case that religion is a divisive, violent and destructive force in human life.⁷ Though their rhetoric, ironically, in some respects mirrors the religious fundamentalism to which they are opposed, they have succeeded in creating an environment where it is no longer taken for granted that religion is on the side of virtue. It is not difficult to puncture their complacent assurance that, while religion fosters ignorance, fanaticism and violence, atheism is enlightened, tolerant and progressive.⁸ Nonetheless, they have had some considerable success in giving religion a bad name. This is evident, for example, in the work of groups that campaign for to end religious observance in the public education system.

The perceived hypocrisy of the churches on matters of sex and sexuality has also played a major role in discrediting religion, and Christianity in

⁷ See Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, London: Bantam, 2006; Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, London: Atlantic Books, 2007.

⁸ See e.g. Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.

particular. One of the most marked features of Western societies in the early 21st century has been the acceptance of increasingly liberal attitudes on sexual matters and, in particular, the recognition of alternative sexual identities seen most visibly in legislation to allow for gay marriage. By and large, the churches have been leading opponents of these developments yet, at the same time, there has been a constant stream of revelations of sexual abuses committed under the auspices of the churches in the past, notably abuse of children by priests who continued to enjoy the protection of their churches. This incongruity has greatly damaged the standing and credibility of the churches in the West.

The result of these developments is that the churches are not only swimming against the tide, in terms of the overall cultural direction of the society, but are widely regarded as being discredited or even disgraced. The context for Christian mission in much of the Western world is one of repudiated Christianity.

During 2013 a new movement called the "Sunday Assembly" attracted headlines in the UK. It was styled as a "church for atheists" or "Pentecostalism for the godless". Its originator, comedian Sanderson Jones "got the idea after realising there were lots of things he enjoyed while attending church for weddings and seasonal carol services, such as the sense of togetherness and ritual, but that he 'just couldn't get past the God bit'".⁹ Styling itself "a global movement for wonder and good" it takes as its motto "live better, help often, wonder more".¹⁰ Communal singing, inspirational talks and service to society are prominent features. Its participants find it liberating that it is possible to have a church-type experience without any requirement to believe in God or make any reference to the transcendent. Working within an entirely immanent frame of reference it aims to celebrate and promote positive values that make for a good life, both individually and socially.

⁹ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 October 2013, www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/new-atheist-church-meets-in-bingo-club-1-3159371 [4 March 2014].

¹⁰ See <http://sundayassembly.com> [4 March 2014].

Conscious rejection of Christianity presents a challenging context for the church's witness today. A yet greater difficulty, however, for Christian mission is the direction that has been taken by late modernity during recent decades. Its celebrated "incredulity towards metanarratives"¹¹ has continued to deconstruct and demolish any attempt to establish a stable way of understanding reality. This has been described as "liquid modernity". What makes modernity liquid, according to Zygmunt Bauman, is "its self-propelling, self-intensifying, compulsive and obsessive 'modernization' as a result of which, like liquid, none of the consecutive forms of social life is able to maintain its shape for long."¹² Whereas an evangelistic strategy in earlier times could identify the "plausibility structure" of any given context and establish points of contact for the gospel, this has become much more difficult and improbable in the fluid context prevailing today. A continuously changing and ever more fragmented and atomized society presents a challenge yet more severe than that discerned by Newbigin a generation ago.

The frontier has widened - globalization

A further layer of complexity is added by the global reach of the culture of late modernity. Whereas in earlier times "cultures" had a specific geographical location and a degree of autonomy from the influence of other cultures, the culture of late modernity has exercised an unprecedented degree of worldwide influence. In shorthand, this is often described as "globalization". At a superficial level, this is seen in the near-universal reach of popular brands of fashion, music and sports. At a deeper level, globalization is a matter of the growing domination of the free market in governing human life.

The result has sometimes been described as "economism" – a system that, according to the Oxford English Dictionary – "imposes the primacy of economic causes or factors as the main source of cultural meanings

¹¹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, pp. xxiv-xxv.

¹² Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*, London: Polity Press, 2011, p. 11.

and values."¹³ While such a system has its origins and perhaps its most uninhibited influence in the West, a primary feature of our contemporary context is the extent to which it has established worldwide hegemony. As Collier and Esteban explain: "Economism ... has been carried to the four corners of the globe by the institutions of Western culture – not only by bureaucratic and technocratic organisations, but also by the markets that, thanks to the power of modern communications and the force of modern technology, now form the backbone of the global economic order."¹⁴ It is therefore not only the churches of the West but churches in every part of the world which are faced with this new cultural context.

Together Towards Life in a Secularized World

What does *TTL* have to offer to those at work on this new frontier? In its introduction it acknowledges the question: "How can we proclaim God's love and justice to a generation living in an individualized, secularized, and materialized world?"¹⁵ When it considers local congregations it recognizes both a new context and new initiatives: "... in the secularizing global North, new forms of contextual mission such as 'new monasticism,' 'emerging church,' and 'fresh expressions,' have redefined and revitalized churches."¹⁶

Nonetheless, at first reading, *TTL* might seem to be little engaged with the liquid modern culture of the secularized Western world. It might be argued that a mission affirmation at the beginning of the 21st century ought to have been more explicit in acknowledging this particular and unprecedented context. Its methodology, however, is to start from the

¹³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, cit. Collier and Esteban, *From Complicity to Encounter*, p. 11.

¹⁴ Jane Collier and Rafael Esteban, *From Complicity to Encounter: The Church and the Culture of Economism*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1998, p. 24.

¹⁵ *Together Towards Life* §8, p. 6.

¹⁶ *Together Towards Life* §72, p. 26; see further Jonathan R. Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: From After Virtue to a New Monasticism*, Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2010; David Goodhew, Andrew Roberts & Michael Volland, *Fresh! An Introduction to Fresh Expressions of Church and Pioneer Ministry*, London: SCM, 2012.

content of the faith – "We believe in the Triune God..."¹⁷ – and to unfold its meaning in ways that address the contemporary situation. This chapter argues that this methodological approach does succeed in offering critically important suggestions as to the shape and direction of Christian mission in the context of a globalizing liquid modern culture, though there are points where it might be helpful to make these more explicit.

Mission in Pneumatological Mode

A distinctive feature of *TTL* is that it speaks of mission in terms of the Holy Spirit. While the spirituality of those engaged in mission has always been vital, this is now foregrounded in a new way: "Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives the deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions."¹⁸ This talks the language of people immersed in the culture of "liquid modernity" who struggle to connect with heavily institutional religion but yearn for a viable spirituality.

For the understanding and experience of Christian faith, *TTL* marks a departure from the privileging of the rational and cerebral that was adopted in an attempt to come to terms with the European Enlightenment. This was always a reductionist approach and its shortcomings have been laid bare particularly by the worldwide revolution known as Pentecostalism that has recovered the spiritual core of New Testament Christianity.¹⁹ Besides Pentecostalism, many other branches of the church, in their own way, are rediscovering the spiritual dimension – as demonstrated by the positive reception accorded to *TTL* by so many different church constituencies. Knud Jorgensen is not alone in the confession he makes about his own journey in recent years: "I have over the last few years ... sensed a change in my own focus, a move from strategy and doing towards *being and witnessing*.... The shift towards *being* more than *doing* begins with a renewal of our personal and common spiritual

¹⁷ *Together Towards Life* §1, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Together Towards Life* §3, p. 4.

¹⁹ See further Wonsuk Ma and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship*, Oxford: Regnum, 2013.

life...."²⁰ This appears to be a point of convergence for the world church at this time and this is not unrelated to the need to meet the challenges posed by the culture of liquid modernity.

Given the discrediting of religion and widespread aversion to heavily institutional forms of organization, there is an urgent need for the spiritual quality of Christianity to be demonstrated. Unfolding the meaning of Christian mission in terms of the Holy Spirit is a timely initiative. It is intriguing and inviting language. It challenges everyone to look beyond their dogmatic defences to discover the authenticity of life in the Spirit. Such is the mystery of the Spirit that all are reminded of their finitude and vulnerability, while all may be inspired by possibilities of growth and transformation.

Admittedly, there is an element of risk in taking a pneumatological approach in a liquid modern culture. Will distinctive points of Christian faith also end up being dissolved? Though *TTL* itself could hardly be more firmly anchored in Trinitarian and Christological belief, questions might be raised about the direction of travel. Such questions are acknowledged by *TTL* by the emphasis it places on "discernment of spirits".²¹ Still, when "affirmation of life" is given as the key criterion for such discernment does it win in terms of communication and solidarity at the cost of losing clarity and definition? Gerrit Noort, on the basis of Dutch responses to *TTL* has suggested that, "a critical step has been taken without sufficient theological debate about the implications for mission."²²

This is a healthy area of debate since the journey of inculturation invariably raises the question as to whether faithfulness to the gospel has been sustained in the necessary quest for relevance. Mission has to walk that fine line. Meeting a liquid modern culture with an open, pneumatological understanding of mission may entail an element of risk but is this not the

²⁰ Knud Jorgensen, "Inspiration and Challenges from Cape Town and Edinburgh to Church and Mission," *Transformation* Vol. 29/4 (October 2012), pp. 293-303 [294].

²¹ *Together Towards Life*, §24, p. 11.

²² Gerrit Noort, "'So What?'- Dutch Responses to the New Mission Statement," *International Review of Mission* Vol. 102.2 (397), November 2013, pp. 191-98 [195].

kind of risk that every true missionary would recognize? The work of Ben Quash helpfully opens up what is involved in the dialectic between what is "given" in Christ and what is "found" as gift of the Spirit: "The givens come alive only in this indefinitely extended series of encounters with new circumstances, and the Christian assumption ought to be that no new found thing need be construed as a threat to what has been given, for we have to do with the same God both in the given and in the found. The God who has 'stocked our backpack for the journey', so to speak, also 'places things in our path', up ahead of us."²³ Such a perspective gives the courage needed to meet a new context with the confidence evoked in *TTL* that, "God is there before we come..."²⁴

Mission and Social Transformation

Lest anyone may imagine that the pneumatological turn in the understanding of mission would lead in an entirely other-worldly direction, *TTL* does not lose time before turning to questions of economics and economic justice. Given the growing inequality and injustice of today's world it might be expected that there would be a great political movement aiming to put things right. However, as Pope Francis has observed: "Something has happened to our politics ... It is out of ideas..."²⁵ Faced with gross injustice on a global scale it seems that politics has been eviscerated and rendered impotent. As Collier and Esteban have argued: "... the culture of economism leads ultimately to a form of totalitarianism, where the only thing demanded from all political institutions is not to interfere with the 'free working of the market' – a euphemism for the free wheeling and dealing of the money oligarchy that dominates the world economy and makes a charade of democratic institutions."²⁶

TTL is perhaps at its most trenchant when confronting the domination of the global free market: "This is a global system of mammon that protects

²³ Ben Quash, *Found Theology: History, Imagination and the Holy Spirit*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. xiv.

²⁴ *Together Towards Life* §30, p. 13.

²⁵ Cit. Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 29.

²⁶ Collier and Esteban, *From Complicity to Encounter*, p. 39.

the unlimited growth of wealth of only the rich and powerful through endless exploitation. This tower of greed is threatening the whole household of God. The reign of God is in direct opposition to the empire of mammon."²⁷ If the note of spirituality in some respects says "yes" to our liquid culture, the affirmation that it is a *transformative* spirituality provides a thundering, prophetic "no" to a central tenet of late modernity – its claim of supremacy for the global free market. For those who are troubled by the acute inequality and injustice found in today's context, for those who want to believe that "another world is possible," *TTL* uncompromisingly meets their concerns.

It will also strike a chord with the many who are concerned by the trends towards ecological devastation identified by Collier and Esteban: "The institutions of global capitalism plunder the ecosystem: they consume energy, they use non-renewable raw materials, they create toxic waste. The diabolic consequences are there for all to see: the environmental degradation, the threat to biodiversity, and the pollution that is now threatening life on the planet.... The myth, so central to economism, of 'growth without limits' has led us to regard as progress the destruction of the earth's capacity to support life."²⁸ Again, *TTL* has strong words: "Consumerism triggers not limitless growth but rather endless exploitation of the earth's resources.... Eco-justice cannot be separated from salvation, and salvation cannot come without a new humility that respects the needs of all life on earth."²⁹

It is apparent that the culture of economism and consumerism is coming unstuck against the magnitude of the ecological crisis now unfolding. The scale of the crisis is such that it is clearly not resolvable within the limitations of the normal political cycle. It may be that only a vision inspired by faith will suffice to create the resources needed to resolve it. By integrating mission more closely than ever before with a theology of creation and by nurturing a transformative spirituality that embraces all life on earth, *TTL* addresses crucial points of concern on which late modern cul-

²⁷ *Together Towards Life* §31, p. 13.

²⁸ Collier and Esteban, *From Complicity to Encounter*, pp. 32-33.

²⁹ *Together Towards Life* §23, pp. 10-11.

ture appears to lack answers. Prophetic critique is offered along with a call to a form of spirituality that can effect transformation.

Mission from the Margins

The currently prevailing social and economic system leaves many people marginalized. *TTL* not only recognizes this but takes a radical and surprising direction when it suggests that it is the marginalized who are the agents of the mission of God, the vanguard of transformation. Here it is necessary to acknowledge that Christianity has been used ideologically to support a global economic system governed from the centre. Much missionary engagement operated on the presuppositions of this view of the world and became, whether intentionally or not, complicit in the system. It is in this context that *TTL* calls for a fundamental re-positioning of Christian mission so that it operates not from the centre but from the margins: "People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view."³⁰

It is from the margins that Lamin Sanneh discerns possibilities for a re-evangelization of the secularized world: "...the evangelization ferment of the frontier contains forces of renewal that can banish the growing shadows of materialism spreading over Europe and thus open the way for the return of theistic faith there. Instead of bemoaning the slide into neo-paganism and rehashing old theological assurances in response, the West can recapture the initiative it unwittingly surrendered in its costly pact with secularism."³¹ A key feature of the "changing landscapes" is the large-scale migration that is bringing the peoples of the world together as never before. This creates new possibilities for missional engagement. *TTL* holds open the possibility that effective mission to late modern culture might come from unexpected quarters, from those regarded as marginalized who now "... re-imagine mission as a vocation from God's Spirit who works for a world where the fullness of life is available for all."³²

³⁰ *Together Towards Life* §38, p. 15.

³¹ Lamin Sanneh, *Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012, p. 232.

³² *Together Towards Life* §37, p. 15.

Mission and the Life of the Church

One quarter of the *TTL* text is devoted to the life of the church. In today's context it may be already a counter-cultural move to speak of "living out our faith in community."³³ In the context of liquid modernity, as Zygmunt Bauman explains: "networks replace structures, and an uninterrupted game of connecting to and disconnecting from those networks and the never-ending sequence of connections and disconnections replace determination, allegiance and belonging."³⁴ By insisting that mission finds expression in the communal life of the church, *TTL* challenges current trends and offers an alternative view of the purpose of life.

TTL's insistence on mission and church being inextricably intertwined may touch a raw nerve in the context of late modernity. As Alasdair MacIntyre concluded his devastating account of the loss of moral bearings in the Western world: "We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another – doubtless very different – St Benedict."³⁵ This was a note that resonated with Lesslie Newbigin and informed his conviction that, "the only possible hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation which believes it."³⁶ If anything, today the process of disintegration has gone much further and the need for a convincing and viable form of church life is yet more urgent. This is not to take a conservative option. Rather it is to look for that renewed form of church life which will be accessible to people formed by the culture of liquid modernity.

Mission Embracing Plurality

An irreducible feature of late modernity is the fact that we live in close proximity to "others," including those who profess a different religion and/or understand ultimate reality in a different way. Wolfgang Welsch

³³ *Together Towards Life* §59, p. 22.

³⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*, London: Polity Press, 2011, p. 14.

³⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed., London: Duckworth, 2007, p. 263.

³⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, London: SPCK, 1989, p. 232.

has suggested that plurality is *the* key issue in postmodernity.³⁷ In that case, *TTL*'s approach to plurality has great bearing on the question of its applicability and usefulness in the liquid modern context. As Bauman suggests: "Unlike in the past, the reality of living in close proximity with strangers seems likely to be here to stay, and so it demands that skills in daily coexistence with ways of life other than our own must be worked out or acquired."³⁸

TTL's contribution, working out of its pneumatological understanding of mission, is to encourage an open and adventurous approach: "We believe that the Spirit of Life brings joy and fullness of life. God's Spirit can be found in all cultures that affirm life."³⁹ It fosters an engaging approach, making the radical and thought-provoking suggestion that, "authentic mission makes the 'other' a partner in, not an 'object' of mission."⁴⁰ This points the way towards a public witness to the gospel that engages a context of plurality. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks remarks: "That is how public morality is constructed in a plural society – not by a single dominant voice, nor by the relegation of moral issues to the private domain of home and local congregation, but by a sustained act of understanding and seeking to be understood across the boundaries of difference."⁴¹

TTL emphasizes the importance of dialogue. Rather than regarding dialogue and evangelism as separate, or even opposed, approaches, *TTL* proposes that they are interrelated: "Although Christians hope and pray that all people may come to a living knowledge of the Triune God, evangelism is not the purpose of dialogue. However, since dialogue is also 'a

³⁷ Wolfgang Iser, *Unsere Postmoderne Moderne*, Darmstadt, 1991, cit. Jan-Olav Henriksen, "Multifaceted Christianity and the Postmodern Condition: Reflections on its Challenges to Churches in the Northern Hemisphere," in Rolf Olsen ed., *Mission and Postmodernities*, Regnum: Oxford, 2011, pp. 3-21 [6].

³⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*, London: Polity Press, 2011, p. 37.

³⁹ *Together Towards Life* §93, p. 34.

⁴⁰ *Together Towards Life* §93, p. 34.

⁴¹ Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, London & New York: Continuum, 2002, p. 83.

mutual encounter of commitments,' sharing the good news of Jesus Christ has a legitimate place in it."⁴² Might the plurality of liquid modernity function for Christian mission as, in the words of Tomás Halik, "a summons to a new Areopagus?"⁴³ *TTL* seems to point in this direction with its proposal that, "Evangelism entails not only proclamation of our deepest convictions, but also listening to others and being challenged and enriched by others."⁴⁴ By recovering the spiritual roots of the faith and fostering an open, dialogical approach to a context of plurality, *TTL* offers an understanding of mission that has traction in today's liquid modernity.

Surely it was wise counsel when David Bosch proposed that what mission needs in our time is "bold humility – or a humble boldness".⁴⁵ Both qualities are evident in *TTL* and it seeks to strike a balance between the two. Again, there are lessons to be learned from Newbigin. He would always insist that the gospel is not a private matter but rather public truth – hence the need for confidence. At the same time, our apprehension of the gospel is always incomplete, awaiting the *eschaton* – hence the need for humility.⁴⁶ *TTL* concludes on a strongly eschatological note: "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth!"⁴⁷ However, its delicate intertwining of confidence and humility could be further supported and developed by greater consideration of the eschatological nature of the gospel.

Mission and Proclamation

The note of confidence is clearly evident in *TTL*'s call to evangelize: "Evangelism is mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous

⁴² *Together Towards Life* §95, p. 35.

⁴³ Tomás Halik, "The Soul of Europe: An Altar to the Unknown God," *International Review of Mission* Vol. 95 Nos 378/379, pp. 265-70 [269].

⁴⁴ *Together Towards Life* §95, p. 35.

⁴⁵ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, New York: Orbis, 1991, p. 489.

⁴⁶ See further Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "The Church in the Post-Christian Society between Modernity and Late Modernity: L. Newbigin's Post-Critical Missional Ecclesiology," in Olsen, *Mission and Postmodernities*, pp. 83-108 [106].

⁴⁷ Isaiah 65:17; *Together Towards Life* §112, p. 40.

the centrality of the incarnation, suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ without setting limits to the saving grace of God. It seeks to share this good news with all who have not yet heard it and invites them to an experience of life in Christ."⁴⁸ This includes "the invitation to personal conversion to new life in Christ and to discipleship".⁴⁹ It is important that *TTL* in this way opens up the personal dimension of faith and discipleship. It will be for those who consider it in the context of liquid modernity to further explore what this will mean in terms of meeting the personal existential crisis that is a common feature of the late modern world. Charles Taylor detects much evidence of "... a profound dissatisfaction with a life encased entirely in the immanent order. The sense is that this life is empty, flat, devoid of higher purpose."⁵⁰ The discontents of late modernity can act as an invitation for Christian witness.

Perhaps it is the question of what it means to be human which offers the most promising ground on which Christian evangelists might meet with contemporaries whose outlook is shaped by liquid modernity. Andrew Kirk has suggested that: "The principal point of contact between the Gospel message and a so-called postmodern generation is not so much postmodernity, as a view of the world, as *the experience of being human*. What is at stake is what it means to be human. I believe that the notion of human flourishing is a place where Christian faith can engage with contemporary culture with a starting point that both sides can agree is significant."⁵¹ Likewise Charles Taylor suggests that, "... for any liveable understanding of human life, there must be some way in which this life looks good, whole, proper, really being lived as it should." He suggests that, "The swirling debate between belief and unbelief, as well as between different versions of each, can ... be seen as a debate about what

⁴⁸ *Together Towards Life* §80, p. 29.

⁴⁹ *Together Towards Life* §85, p. 31.

⁵⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 506.

⁵¹ J. Andrew Kirk, "The Postmodern Condition and the Churches' (Co)Mission," in Olsen, *Mission and Postmodernities*, pp. 22-35 [34, my emphasis].

real fullness consists in."⁵² The question of what it means to be truly human is an urgent one in today's liquid modernity and offers perhaps the most promising point of engagement for the Christian proclamation.

Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, seeks to engage the emotional level, observing, for example, that: "our technological society has succeeded in multiplying occasions of pleasure, yet has found it very difficult to engender joy."⁵³ Perhaps it is the joy of the gospel that holds the key to touching the heart of a post-modern generation? Neither institutional authority nor rhetorical brilliance make much impression in the context of liquid modernity. This is a disillusioned, distrustful and suspicious age. Hence the value of expressing the faith in an emotional key.

The ministry of proclamation in our contemporary situation is not unconnected with the witness for social justice and transformation outlined above. It is worth recalling the words of David Bosch: "As we call people (back) to faith in God through Jesus Christ, we must help them to articulate an answer to the question 'What do we have to become Christians for?' At least part of the answer to this question will have to be: 'In order to be enlisted into God's ministry of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth.'"⁵⁴ With this in view, *TTL* makes the point that: "The gospel is liberative and transformative. Its proclamation must involve transformation of societies with a view to creating just and inclusive communities."⁵⁵ To have integrity in the context of liquid modernity, evangelism must be a matter of encounter that is transformative for all involved, as together we discover new ways in which the gospel meets the crisis of our time

Conclusion: Challenging Relevance

Lesslie Newbigin liked to recall a phrase coined by A.G. Hogg to describe what it takes to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ: "challenging relevance". As Newbigin explained: "The Gospel must be heard as rele-

⁵² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 143, p. 600.

⁵³ *Evangelii Gaudium* §7.

⁵⁴ David J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*, Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1995, p. 34.

⁵⁵ *Together Towards Life* §91, pp. 33-34.

vant. It must speak of things which are real things in the life of the hearer. It must therefore begin by accepting his issues, using his models and speaking his language. But relevance alone is not enough. The Gospel must at the same time challenge the whole world view of the hearer."⁵⁶ This chapter has attempted to show how the 2013 World Council of Churches mission affirmation *Together Towards Life* strikes notes which resonate in the context of liquid modernity while also making a call to conversion and transformation. It offers, in short, "challenging relevance".

The importance of this is underlined by the realization that secularization is no temporary blip. It represents a permanent reshaping of human consciousness from which ever fewer of the human community remain immune. Pervasive liquid modernity defines the context for mission and evangelism in the world of the 21st century. Bert Hoedemaker stated the scale of the challenge: "The problem of secularization ... requires a reformulation of the goals, means, and motives of mission. Beyond that, it requires a rethinking of the position of Christianity in a religiously and culturally plural world, even a reconstruction of its tradition in that perspective."⁵⁷ In many respects, *TTL* has stepped up to this challenge, even if its response is often implicit and inviting further development.

With its orientation to the spiritual dimension of life, its robust challenge to the culture of economism, its solidarity with those on the margins, its insistence that faith must be expressed in community, its unhesitating embrace of plurality, and its confidence in the power of the gospel to address the human crisis, *TTL* suggests a series of points of engagement with the culture of liquid modernity. The task ahead is to critique, deepen, exemplify and expand its suggestions. *TTL* may then come to be regarded as a ground-breaking resource for mission and evangelism in the context of liquid modernity.

⁵⁶ Cit. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 196.

⁵⁷ Bert Hoedemaker, *Secularization and Mission: A Theological Essay*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1998, p. 40.

24. *Còmhraidhean*: Doing Local Theology in Argyll

Over the five years from 2012 to 2017, every Spring and Autumn, a group of people gathered overnight at Glencruitten House, near Oban, to engage theologically with our contemporary context. The initiative was prompted by a concern shared among a very loosely connected network of people based in Argyll, Scotland. Their common concern is that they deeply value the Christian faith but notice that many contemporaries seem to find that they can "do fine" without it, choosing to live their lives in ways that often are rich and fulfilling in many respects but which apparently have no place for traditional understandings of faith in God or Christian discipleship. They themselves also, in varying degrees, share in the sense of disconnect between inherited understandings of faith and "the way we live now". So the question is: how could this disconnect be overcome? How could a renewed connection be formed between our contemporary world and the realities to which Christian faith bears witness?

This question brought six people together one winter evening early in 2012 and the idea of an Argyll "faith and culture conversation" was born. It would explore points of engagement between contemporary culture and Christian faith and would do this in a specifically Argyll context. In fact, it would even take its name from Argyll's historic language – hence the title *còmhradh*, the Gaelic word for conversation. It would aim to be rooted in the life of Argyll but at the same time to be far from parochial. It would work on a large canvas. It would seek to dig deep into Argyll's history. It would be extensive geographically too, taking account of the worldwide extent of Christian faith today. And it would be engaged with the prevailing culture of the Western world today in all its aspects.

The reference to culture is intended to indicate what Harold Turner described as "deep culture".¹ This looks beyond social customs. It aims to uncover the underlying worldview which people use as their map to navigate life. It is concerned with the implicit assumptions that lie behind the

¹ See Harold Turner, "Deep Mission to Deep Culture," [www.gospel-culture.org.uk/Deep%20mission%20\(full%20text\).pdf](http://www.gospel-culture.org.uk/Deep%20mission%20(full%20text).pdf) [2 May 2017].

decisions people take and the priorities they set. It aims to identify the axioms – the points that are taken for granted. It seeks to trace paradigms – the frameworks people have in mind that enable them to make sense of what they experience. This is what is intended by "deep culture".

Among the six on that winter evening was David James who very kindly agreed to make Glencruitten House, a private house near Oban with an ethos of Christian community, available to host the *còmhradh*. Not only did this provide very comfortable and suitable accommodation but it allowed the *còmhradh* to situate itself at some distance from any particular institution. There is no official organization that is responsible for it. It is a freelance initiative. It stands or falls simply on the strength of its ability to offer something worthwhile. It operates in an open space, which has its risks and drawbacks but which means that it is free of the inhibitions that often come with institutional interests and constraints.

At the outset it was recognised that the "disconnect" between faith and culture can be addressed in many different ways, including e.g. prayer, service or evangelism. The particular calling taken up by the *còmhradh*, however, is to deepen the conversation through taking time together to attain clarity in understanding where our contemporary culture is going and what it means for faith; as well as where contemporary faith is going and what it means for culture. It is a chance to "step back from the action" for a little while, to reflect upon it with a view to returning to it with sharper understanding and renewed motivation – somewhat along the lines of the action-reflection cycle.

The group has sensed that its shared concerns call for conversation and that this is something that requires intentional investment of time and energy. It has also been responding to a sense that quality conversation is at a premium in a world awash with information but often lacking in analytical depth. To find people who know and trust one another, who share at depth their thoughts and experiences, is increasingly rare. In the assessment of Jonathan Sacks, "Conversation, the heartbeat of democratic politics, is dying and with it our chances of civic, let alone global,

peace."² Sacks goes on to argue that: "... the question is real and urgent: how do we live with moral difference and yet sustain an overarching community? The answer ... is *conversation* – not mere debate but the disciplined act of communicating (making my views intelligible to someone who does not share them) and listening (entering into the inner world of someone whose views are opposed to my own)."³ The *còmhradh* has been inspired by this kind of vision.

Emerson once remarked that he would walk a hundred miles through a snowstorm for one good conversation.⁴ The same motivation has brought people from different parts of Argyll (not necessarily through snowstorms) to show the high value that they place on conversation. The poet Adrienne Rich observes that a good conversation is one where, rather than saying what you have formulated ahead of time, you "hear each other into speech".⁵ Rather than participants coming along with their favourite speech and waiting for the chance to deliver it, this is about listening to each other in order to draw out from each other thoughts and ideas which we scarcely knew were there, to form understanding and voice thoughts which had not been clear to us before. A recurrent source of joy at the *còmhradh* has been the experience of surprise it has brought as new and unexpected understanding has been formed.

In order to remain focussed on its core purpose, the *còmhradh* has resisted becoming like a regular conference with a series of prepared presentations. Rather, brief thought-pieces are pitched as discussion starters. For the most part, there is no prior script. Participants go where the conversation takes them, often surprised by what happens when they "hear each other into speech". The group has also kept administration to a minimum. Planning is delegated to a small group, which, usually through one meeting, lays plans for the next *còmhradh*. No attempt has

² Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, London & New York: Continuum, 2002, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴ Cit. Christian McEwen, *World Enough & Time: On Creativity and Slowing Down*, Peterborough, New Hampshire: Bauhan Publishing, 2011, p. 46.

⁵ Cit. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

been made to achieve slick organization or glossy communications. A low-key web presence is maintained at www.faithinargyll.com.

A distinctive feature of each conversation is that it is framed by worship. Since much of the talk is about God it seems appropriate to offer space to acknowledge the presence of God. Since the conversation necessarily involves a lot of talking, rather few words tend to be used in the worship – often a little scripture, prayer and song with plenty of silence and space to process at a spiritual level what has been under discussion.

By Spring of 2017, ten *còmhraidhean* had taken place. A brief review of each will reveal the main concerns that have animated the *còmhradh* and indicate how these have been addressed.

Identifying Culture and Context

The first *còmhradh* began with an intentionally open agenda, inviting participants to identify our contemporary cultural context. Under two encompassing headings the following points were offered:

Relationships: Fragmentation and Connection

- Extended Family
- Valuing friendship
- Greed
- Individualism – the "me me" society
- Insular
- Materialism
- People's identity tied to work
- Celebrity culture
- Social media – global community
- 24/7 "pressure pressure"
- Openness, honesty
- Friendliness valued
- Generosity of spirit
- Mobile communities
- Declining community spirit – reduced volunteering

- Changing place of church in community
- Is the church still "doing community"?

Questions of Morality and Accountability

- Individual freedom prized
- Authority resented
- Changing sense of right and wrong
- "Do what you like as long as you don't hurt anyone"
- No concept of sin
- Loss of ability to make moral judgments
- The law has become a tyrant
- Worried about security
- Looking for quick-fix
- Entitlement culture
- Feudalism
- Entrenched in tradition
- Science supreme
- Rise of secular spirituality

In turning to the Argyll context, conversation revolved around the life of Columba, finding focus on his willingness to be on the "edge". Iona in his time appeared to be a place "on the edge" of the known world. It carried something of the sense of standing on a cliff edge with the known behind and the unknown beyond. What might it mean to be located at the edge between faith and the secular vision? This may be a time to step out of our comfort zone, to face insecurity, to take risks. Was Bob Dylan a prophet for our time when he told us that "the times they are a' chang'in"? Our cultural context is rapidly changing and it is time to think out of the "box" to which we have been accustomed.

Nonetheless, reflection on the global scene suggested that the Christian faith is translatable and therefore its advocates can meet a new cultural context with confidence. This, however, may involve a recognition that what "has been" may have limited relevance and there is need to step into a new situation with sensitivity, expectation and prayer. Sharing

stories and "walking the talk" may be ways to engage an apparently uninterested community. Humility and vulnerability may be keynotes – being confident in our faith yet aware that we still have much to learn. Being ready to connect at an emotional level may also be important for the future.

Faith and Friendship

After the first general, scene-setting *còmhraidh* it was agreed that each should concentrate on a particular theme. The next, held in Spring 2013, took up the relational note that had been struck by the first and addressed the question of "faith and friendship". In opening worship it was noted that the word "friend," like the word "free," comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *freo* the root of which means to love. You can only be really free if you love.

It was observed that in the contemporary world many live without friends. Surveys have revealed that many people believe that they have very few friends, or none at all. Admittedly many can count hundreds of Facebook "friends" but these are, in most cases, self-evidently shallow relationships. Connections made through social media can easily hollow out the meaning of friendship leaving a very cheap substitute. Real friendship is more elusive and thinner on the ground than might be suggested by the self-image we have of our society. The growth of loneliness in modern Western societies is widely acknowledged. It seems that our society has lost its way in regard to friendship.

A glance at our modern history shows that the Industrial Revolution broke up small communities where all knew each other and where life-long friendships through shared living and working proliferated. In post-industrial times this trend has been taken still further. The level of mobility demanded in modern society easily and casually breaks up families, communities and often friendships too. We are also a more individualistic society. We are encouraged to think first and foremost of ourselves. We use other people in an instrumental way – what benefits are there for me in getting to know that other person? Young professionals are told to take care to cultivate their networks - rather than their friendships. The power of the market is far-reaching but its effect on the value placed on friendship calls for re-examination.

The wholesale sexualisation of our culture has also had a debilitating effect upon friendship. The assumptions that surround a large swathe of our social contacts involve sex. The public mind or our social culture steers us in this direction. It becomes more difficult to nurture good friendship when those around you assume a sexual relationship or at least the desire for such is omnipresent. One of the reasons for the rise of single person households is that sharing accommodation with another carries unwanted assumptions in modern society. The statement "We are just friends" implies a second-class relationship. "He/she just wants to be friends" is often an expression of disappointment.

Could we develop a culture in which true friendship will flourish? Could the church be a pilot for this, modelling true friendship? Could we consciously recover the Celtic tradition of the soul friend – *anam chara*? The church needs to seek to make the soil of society around us more conducive to the nurturing and valuing of genuine friendship. We need to be ready to make time and space for the cultivation of friendship. This can also be a pathway to faith. While it is important that friendship should be for the sake of friendship and not something exercised with ulterior motives, experience shows that faith very often springs from friendship. We are challenged to live in such a way that we make space for others, cultivating soil in which true friendship can grow.

Faith in Community

The next *còmhradh* took a natural further step by turning its attention to the question of community. Community is a very big part of human reality – something that is universally recognized. Communities have often been organized around faith. But they can be organized in other ways. How do people see community today? What place, if any, does faith have in community? What can we learn from past history? What can we learn from elsewhere in the world? What is a Christian understanding of community? These were the questions with which the conversation began.

A primary point of reference was Argyll's history and, in particular, Columba's vision of the community of faith. The context in which Columba's vision was formed was that of clan life but nevertheless it grew beyond the confines of clan life into a vision of a universal community of the children of God. His vision of the Christian community was of a godly clan

with the Almighty as its chief. Many of the good things about clan life - faithful loving relationships, loyalty, sacrifice for the common good - were in accord with the characteristics of God's kingdom. At the same time, the rivalries, self-seeking and brutality of clan life were superseded by Christian values. In God's clan, those who had been enemies became friends in Christ.

Columba emphasized that membership of God's clan was not exclusive, the invitation extended to all people and nations. So, although Columba founded his monastery on Iona along with close family members, Iona attracted people from all the neighbouring kingdoms. The Iona community attracted members from the land of the Picts and Welsh speakers from the Kingdom of Strathclyde, all adopted into God's clan on Iona. Columba brought the Gospel message of membership of God's kingdom to the people of his day in a way that fitted with people's experience and expectation of being clan members. They understood what it meant to be children of God through their experience of being children of the clan.

Another aspect of the clan system that was incorporated into Columba's vision of the Christian Community was that of inheritance. This was expressed in the Gaelic term *dùthchas* related to the word *dùthaich* meaning land, country or nation. *Dùthchas* has to do with belonging to one's native land, identifying with its people, its land and history. It refers to that special mystical relationship many indigenous people have with their native land, a land peopled by ancestors and legend. The *dùthchas* is the collective inheritance of the clan members, their inherited right to belong to their land and be numbered amongst its people. Here a parallel can be drawn with biblical thought about our inheritance as adopted children of God - 'if children then heirs, joint heirs with Christ' (Romans 8:17).

After a period of experiencing community together by working outdoors to build a picnic table, the conversation turned to contemporary experience of community. It was recognised that community is widely perceived to be under threat. Underlying factors include atomization of human life, commodification - everyone reduced to a unit in the marketplace, a market-driven world where the workplace demands ever more of our life and which is limited in the extent to which it provides satisfying community, and digitization - people living in a virtual world.

Factors that make community today were identified: shared interest,

technology, civic pride, local loyalties, workplace, institutions, positive human qualities – compassion, kindness, hospitality, generosity of spirit, powerful ideas that bring people together, coming together to tackle a shared problem or issue, and shared political awareness, sometimes related to particular issues. Factors that break community today were likewise identified: technology can be an isolating influence, emphasis on human rights without corresponding responsibilities can lead to egocentricity, selfishness, excessive self-interest and greed, pursuit of material wealth at all costs, migration can lead to homogenization, dispersion, breaking of community links and loyalties, the welfare state has taken over responsibilities previously exercised at community level, family breakdown has led to isolation and loneliness, addictions result in people becoming lonely and isolated.

A final question concerned what distinctive qualities might characterise communities of faith. Suggestions included:

- A community characterized by love will always be distinctive, demonstrating qualities such as acceptance, forgiveness, care and compassion.
- A community that has a focus beyond materialism is always going to be distinctive.
- A community that is outward-looking with wide horizons and an outgoing orientation is always going to be distinctive.
- An exemplary level of mutual support - openness to sharing the joys and sorrows of one another
- Strength of conviction
- Connecting – a community which connects people with God and with one another.

The search for community and the place of faith in building true community were found to be crucial questions for both church and society in our time.

Faith and the Environment

Adrian Shaw, Argyll resident and Church of Scotland Climate Change Officer, set the scene for discussion of faith and the environment by contrasting two "stories". The first is about the economy. This story says that we need economic growth to resolve our big problems such as poverty and unemployment and that economic growth will make us richer. Half a century of sustained economic growth faltered in Britain in 2007, nominally because of some bad behaviour by the banks and the housing bubble and now, the story goes, the country needs to get back on track to return to prosperity and full employment. The big political parties may differ in how to achieve this and how the spoils of economic growth should be divided up but they both repeat the message that economic growth is essential for our future wellbeing.

The second story is about the environment. Evidence of warming in the climate system is unequivocal. Since 1950 many unprecedented changes have been observed. Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850. It is extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century. Climate change is happening and we are causing it by burning fossil fuels in prodigious amounts: coal, oil and gas. In Scotland we produce over 40 million tonnes a year of emissions of carbon dioxide, the UK ten times that amount and the USA about 5 billion tonnes. As a consequence, the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere has risen from under 300 ppm to over 400 ppm. The consequences are profound. In the 21st century, climate change will change lives.

What is the relationship between these two stories: one that insists we must have more economic growth and one that says if we carry on like this we are creating huge problems both for ourselves and the other species with which we share the planet? How do these stories relate to the Christian story and the demands made of us that we love our neighbour and care for creation?

Discussion of faith and environment raised the following points:

- We need to accept that Christianity played a part in the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism and repent for the part that the churches have played in damaging the earth.
- Jesus has subverted ideas of "dominion" and introduced a new kind of authority, a new kind of power.
- The church needs to be counter-cultural, fostering more environmentally conscious living – something that may not sit easily with approaches to church growth that aim to fit comfortably in contemporary culture.
- The church may need to be a "site of struggle" - a place where the tensions in relation to faith and the environment are worked out.
- There is need for awareness-raising and education at all levels in relation to climate change and the environmental crisis.
- We must be prepared to be political and to challenge the prevailing system.
- We need to let money talk – investing in initiatives which are geared to sustain the environment.
- Churches can be a force for change, e.g. through the 300 eco-congregations found throughout Scotland.

Practical steps that can be taken include:

- create networks of interdependence
- support local businesses – buy from the farm gate
- grow as much of your own food as possible and have a bartering network
- time banking – exchanging skills and time
- advocacy for change
- credit unions
- car pools
- more use of bikes, including electric bikes
- promote local slaughterhouses
- plant trees
- community building.

Whither Scotland?

The *còmhradh* took a new turn in autumn 2014 when it gathered just a few weeks after the Scottish independence referendum. All present shared a sense of having been part of a momentous occasion. The conversation began with people recalling the feelings they had experienced as they participated in the referendum. These included: a sense of disappointment in having a postal vote because it meant not having the experience of actually walking into the polling station to cast a vote; pride that Scotland was succeeding in completing this huge democratic exercise in a peaceful manner; conflicted feelings about the outcome, e.g. voting "No" but hoping that the outcome would be "Yes"; a sense of surprise that, given the magnitude of the occasion, in Argyll you could easily be the only person at the polling station at the time you went to vote; deep concern to have an empathetic understanding of the other side, especially of the losing side – their feelings of disappointment and sorrow.

Alan Reid MP shared his reflections on how the referendum had been a vote for or against an idea – as opposed to a normal election when it is a matter of parties and individuals standing for office. There is alienation from the democratic process because people are distrustful towards the fallible human beings who are their elected representatives. In the case of the referendum, this element of distrust was set aside and people engaged in greater numbers and with greater passion. He reflected on his experience as an MP where he has observed that people become highly engaged with "single issues" such as school closures in Argyll or Israeli bombing of Gaza but have very limited interest in the entirety of the political process, much of which is necessarily routine and "boring". People tend to be reactive in their response to the political process, e.g. they don't engage with a local plan when it is at the proposal stage but then protest loudly when some aspect of it is about to be implemented and they don't like it. How could we foster an ongoing popular engagement with the entirety of the political process?

Among points raised in discussion were:

- How can we promote more local democracy, i.e. enabling more decisions to be taken at a more local level and mobilizing a high level of participation in such a process?
- How can the passion of the 45% who voted for independence be captured for the task of taking the nation forward after the “No” vote in the Referendum?
- How can the whole nation move forward as a unit, rather than half being disillusioned or left behind?
- How will the Scottish Parliament make use of the greater powers about to be devolved, assuming that the Westminster parties fulfil their promises? Will it use the new powers to create a fairer society and a more participatory democracy?
- How will a shared public discourse take shape, given loss of confidence in the BBC due to lack of impartiality in the referendum and rapid decline of the Scottish broadsheet newspapers?
- How can the hope engendered by the referendum process be sustained and directed? Can politics once again be a channel for hope, rather than disempowering itself in favour of the free market?
- The referendum created a sense of empowerment – can we as individuals and communities sustain that sense of empowerment in the way we live our lives and make our decisions.
- Where is God in the stirring of national consciousness taking place in Scotland? Absent? Present? If we believe that the Spirit of God is active in the world at large and in the unfolding of history, how do we make sense of what has been happening in that perspective?

Believing in Business

To talk of faith and business might seem strange to some. In our Western compartmentalized view of the world, the economy is often seen as something that runs according to its own dynamics while faith, if it is given a place at all, is concerned with a totally different aspect of life. If you are in business you run the business on business principles and if, in your down time, you choose to go the opera or the football or the church, that is fine but it is not expected to have any bearing on the way

you do business. In Spring 2015 the *còmhradh* set about probing such assumptions. Can, should, faith have a place in inspiring and operating business? Should the economic sphere be an active concern of people of faith? Should business be open to what might be offered by the practice of faith?

Three specific questions were posed:

1. What is the role of faith in creating livelihoods and sustaining business in Argyll?
2. How does faith find expression in business?
3. What difference does faith make to the operation of business?

Robert Pollock, former Head of Economic Development at Argyll and Bute Council, argued that far from being irrelevant, faith is the beating heart of the economy. Adam Smith's work on the market economy indicated that all was predicated on human virtue. If there are no sound values, no good person, at the heart of it then the market system will become rapacious and therefore unable to fulfil the ennobling and enriching role that Smith envisaged. He identified a number of macro-economic issues that have a bearing on the economy of Argyll:

- Energy – oil supply is beset by periodic crises but at the end of the day it is a finite resource. Yet the economy, particularly in rural areas, is driven by oil. Currently the Government has moved away from the off-shore wind farms, which would have been significant for Argyll, in favour of nuclear power and fracking. However, there is likely to be a return, sooner or later, to renewable forms of energy.
- Demography – people are the barometer that indicates the strength of the economy (Rousseau). The population of Argyll (2% of Scottish population) is ageing. It is expected that by 2035 there will be a 20% growth in retired people, with a 14% decline in the working population. Who will pay for the welfare state?
- Information Technology – this is a wonderful resource for tourism, for education, for retail. Yet it brings change to the economy – it is expected that 40% of current jobs will disappear.
- Climate Change – as this poses challenges world-wide, Argyll remains a beautiful environment, a prized environment.

Pollock also identified a number of micro perspectives that may help Argyll to navigate the macro issues:

- Argyll is close to major centres of population but feels very remote.
- Argyll is perfectly placed to be a centre of renewable energy and projects like the Argyll array and the Islay array may well be revived.
- The tourism product is fantastic – 25 inhabited islands. Food and drink are world-class.
- The history and heritage of Argyll, built on Christianity, is a significant asset.

These local assets can be applied to the global context. Faith has an important role to play in the economy of the future. We have uncoupled morality from the economy and there is need to re-couple them. Faith is key to this.

Four people shared their own experience of working at the intersection of faith and business. Based at the Mo Dhachaigh croft at Lochdon on the Isle of Mull, Liz Gibson aims to reclaim Christianity as an alternative to the establishment rather than part of it. She and her husband Martin aim to live a simple life, running their croft, growing as much of their own food as possible and developing arts and crafts. They are inspired by Wordsworth's lines:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!⁶

They suggest that we need to hear again the teaching of Jesus about seeking first the kingdom of God, about where your treasure is your heart will be also, about if you have two coats, give away one.

Oban businessman Neil Matheson urged that in a situation where many are hopeless, it is essential to rebuild confidence – we were made to

⁶ William Wordsworth, "The World is too much with us," www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45564 [2 May 2017].

thrive. Neil has seen this philosophy working in his retail business, in the social enterprise Atlantis Leisure and in the Christian charity H2O (Hope to Oban). Faith and good business practice are much closer than is often imagined. Faith guides business decisions, often tacitly, simply by under-lying the decision to do something or not to do something.

Richard Hess reflected on his experience of setting up Imani, an Oban-based economic development consultancy working primarily in Africa but also in Scotland. Key to his business vision was to offer a service that was ethical and trustworthy. Imani hired staff who shared its ethics, whether Christians or not.

Imani is active today helping large companies to source materials from small-holders in Africa, e.g. pods from baobab trees provide the main ingredient for cream of tartar. This is a model that can be very relevant to Argyll's economy, e.g. biscuits baked on Mull are served on British Airways. Big businesses today are interested not only in their profits but also in contributing to the community. The model of the social enterprise has much to commend it both in the developing world and in Argyll.

Calum Macfarlane-Barrow reflected on the development of Craig Lodge in Dalmally since 1977 when he began running it, initially as a sporting lodge. Through visits to Medjugorje where appearances of the Mother of God were having a transforming effect in terms of healing and holiness, the Macfarlane-Barrow family formed a vision to take the Lodge in a different direction. They became convinced that people were suffering through being "hooked on materialism" and that there was a widely felt need to return to God and discover the power of prayer. Craig Lodge opened as a house of prayer in 1990. A community of young people began to form and over the years 130 young people have spent a year at Craig Lodge. The inspirational Scottish charity Mary's Meals, now feeding more than a million children every day, has been one fruit of this work.

In summary, it was felt that human beings are reaching out for more than the material. Business has lost its way by becoming exclusively concerned with maximization of profits. Going back to Adam Smith reminds us that ethics lie at the heart of the running of the economy and faith has a pivotal role to play. All four local businesses had gone "off the grid," taking risks and being prepared for adventure. Confidence is key to success. There is nothing like the sense of being "God's special child" to instil con-

fidence. In this way faith makes for an entrepreneurial approach and good business. Enterprise needs faith and faith needs enterprise.

Faith and National Identity

By the time the *còmhradh* convened in autumn 2015 it was apparent that Argyll, and the whole of Scotland, was in an extraordinary political moment. The Scottish National Party, having previously held just six seats, won 56 out of 59 Scottish seats at the 2015 General Election. In the aftermath of the independence referendum it was apparent that the political landscape had been transformed out of all recognition, with the previously dominant Labour Party retaining only one seat. It was agreed that the *còmhradh* would dedicate its autumn meeting to taking account from a faith perspective of this unfolding political transformation.

Political scientist Donald Shell provided an analytical framework, with the following pointers:

- Ideology has given way to identity in much contemporary politics.
- Each of us has multiple identities, e.g. gender, ethnicity, religion, national allegiance.
- Patriotism is love or devotion to one's country. Nationalism, by contrast, involves a policy programme.
- Nationalism is an ideological "empty bottle" which can be filled with ideologies of left or right.
- Some see national identity as "in our genes"; others as historical and circumstantial; others as manufactured through myths, flags, anthems, indoctrination.

A Christian theology of national identity begins with the doctrine of creation, with diversity an expression of humanity made in God's image and a vision of many nations worshipping in heaven and bringing treasures into the heavenly city. However, there is also a darker side associated with human pride and rebellion, and seen in the tower of Babel - confusion of language, mutual incomprehension and providential judgment. Between these two contrasting theological strands we must work out our theology of the state. We also take our direction from the kingdom of God established through Jesus Christ - God's rule embracing in principle the whole

public realm including our politics.

Argyll-based Conservative MSP Jamie McGrigor admitted that he was astonished that anyone would not want to be a part of the United Kingdom, given its success across 300 years. Yet, during the referendum campaign, those not of the Nationalist view were made to feel in some way unScottish. This, he suggested, was unfair because why would a wish to safeguard the best for Scotland and the Scottish people be in any way subversive or unpatriotic and why should patriotism just be linked to being an SNP supporter? Scottish people who want to preserve the Union are just as patriotic Scots as those who bid for separation. National identity in Scotland that respects us all is a different matter from nationalist identity in Scotland. He was concerned that there is a dark side to nationalism – identified by Albert Einstein as the measles of mankind and by George Orwell as power hunger, tempered by self-deception. Scotland, in his view, has flourished under the Union which has provided ample outlets for the expression of national identity.

Scottish National Party MP for Argyll and Bute, Brendan O'Hara, recalled that in the 1950s and 1960s it felt natural for Scotland to be part of the Union. Independence was not even on the agenda. British-Scottish identity appeared to be an exclusive club – which excluded Catholics. The Catholic community in the west of Scotland, for their part, were more identified politically with Ireland than with Scotland. The sea change that has occurred is evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of Catholics voted against devolution in 1979 but the vast majority voted "yes" in the 2014 Referendum. In economic and cultural terms there is an increasing sense of being Scottish and the SNP has moved from the periphery to become the dominant force in Scottish politics. It is important to notice that it is not an ethnic but a civic nationalism that is prevailing. This is illustrated by groups like "Asians for Independence". We now have an inclusive Scotland – one where resettled Syrian refugees will have a vote.

A concluding part of the conversation addressed the question: if a new national anthem were to be written for Scotland what would we want it to contain?

- The language would need to be prepared in such a way that it could be sung in English, Scots and Gaelic.

- A faith dimension – invoking St Andrew, the singing of the Psalms, celebrating a history, expressing aspirations.
- Words on the Mace of the Scottish Parliament – wisdom, justice, compassion, integrity.
- The land – as it has shaped the people; a spiritual landscape; embraced by its beauty; caring for our land and for each other.
- Solidarity, communion – we are all "Jock Tamson's bairns". Inclusivity, a "tartan nation," social justice (Micah 6:8), liberty, the common good, forgiveness, learning.
- Internationalist outlook – emigration; Burns' "shall brithers be for a' that"; celebrating with others the world we live in.
- Recognition that we have come through hardship in our history.
- Belonging, yearning, far horizons, big sky. Peace – a peace-making nation. Thinking in terms of what we can give.
- "Love that will not let me go."

Argyll's Spiritual Landscape

The Spring 2016 *còmhradh* made a new departure by taking a book as the springboard for the conversation. Ian Bradley joined the group to introduce his recently published book *Argyll: The Making of a Spiritual Landscape*.⁷ First, however, everyone brought an object or told a story expressing something in Argyll's spiritual landscape that has been inspirational for them. Participants shared their experience in a personal and sometimes emotional way, making for a very rich beginning to the conversation.

Ian Bradley explained that the starting point of his book was the question as to why the Christianity of Argyll is so different from that found in neighbouring regions. It is altogether gentler and less judgemental than the Christianity of the Western Isles and Northern Highlands and altogether simpler and more mystical than that found in Central and Eastern Scotland.

⁷ Ian Bradley, *Argyll: The Making of a Spiritual Landscape*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2015.

Perhaps Argyll's distinctive spiritual atmosphere is the result of a blending of the best of the surrounding traditions – the evangelical simplicity of the northern Highlands and Outer Hebrides without its harsher side and tendency towards judgmentalism and the enlightened moderatism of Eastern and Lowland Scotland without its over-rational suspicion of the romantic and mystical. There are other respects in which Argyll brings different traditions together – sometimes they stand in juxtaposition like the Highland and the Lowland churches in Campbeltown and the English and Gaelic speaking division of Inverary Parish Church. There is more than in any other region of Scotland an intermingling of the pagan and primal with the Christian; and of the Protestant with the Catholic. Through the interplay of these different streams Argyll has come to be characterised by a blend of evangelical simplicity and liberal mysticism.

Argyll's Presbyterianism has had a distinctive character, markedly more mystical, more liturgical and more liberal than that found in other areas, especially of the Highlands. Several factors may account for this - the lingering influence of Columba and the other Irish missionaries and saints; the fact that unlike so many clan chieftains and lairds the Dukes of the Argyll remained loyal to the Kirk and did not forsake it for Episcopalianism; the region's loyalty to the Established 'Auld Kirk' with the consequence that the influence of the Free Church has been less keenly felt than further north. Maybe, too, climatic and geographical factors have played a part, from the soft mild rain that makes Argyll so green to its location as a liminal borderland and a place on the edge.

In prepared responses, Liz Gibson cautioned against excessive emphasis on buildings in our understanding of spirituality while Archie MacPhail highlighted the danger of stereotypes, e.g. in characterising the north-west as harsh and judgemental when it may be simply at an early stage in responding to the evangelical impetus. In looking to the future, participants identified concerns and hopes in regard to Argyll's spirituality.

Concerns

- Individualism – loss of community and orality
- Globalization – plethora of influences
- Lack of shared language – privatization.

Hopes

- Resurgence of Gaelic
- Music – *Fèis*
- Art
- Return to rituals and symbols
- Return to the elements – connecting to land
- Pilgrimage – affirming local culture, not institutions
- Ethical values of youth – affordable housing, land reform
- Changing ethnicity e.g. Polish
- Return to Christian communities
- Recovery of the mystical
- Need for authenticity.

In October 2016, the *còmhradh* continued its practice of taking account of the political "moment," this time in the aftermath of the vote in favour of the UK leaving the European Union. This was examined through the lens of inclusion and exclusion, beginning with participants speaking personally about their own experience both of being included and of being excluded in the course of their lives. Given the salience of immigration in the debates over EU membership, attention focussed on the theme of migration. It was recognised that this is a large-scale global phenomenon in our time, that it raises profound questions of justice for our society and that it presents both challenges and opportunities to the churches. What will be the chemistry between migrant Christians and the existing churches? Will they react against each other and go their separate ways? Will well-established churches give the cold shoulder to new groups whose spirituality seems strange? Will newcomers shun the older churches, writing them off as dull or dead? Or will they find fruitful forms of interaction? Will Christianity be found fragmented into groups united by their ethnicity, including groups of ethnic Scots? Or will ways be found to show that the faith that unites is stronger than any identity that divides?

In reflecting on the prominence of the economy in shaping our lives today, the contrast between contemporary thinking and biblical values

came into view. If we think of the forces underlying human activity as broadly economic, political and social, we may note that whilst in the contemporary world, economic forces are seen as predominant, under God's law in Old Testament times this was decidedly not so. Today the lines of force are widely viewed as moving from the economy and finance, to political decision-making and then to social structures. This is the exact opposite to what the Old Testament Scriptures envisage for the life of God's people.

In considering how exclusionary dynamics could be resisted and a more inclusive society fostered, the idea of subsidiarity invited fresh consideration – moving any item of government to the lowest level at which it can be handled, bringing it close to the people. By contrast, currently there are many forces drawing government ever more to the centre, whether Edinburgh, London or Brussels. It was also argued that there is need to question excessive specialization in the discipline of economics with a view to building capacity to "see the big picture". The most pressing issue is the need for the market economy to be restrained in such a way as to give due place to human flourishing.

Argyll, Faith and the Visual Arts

Participants on the occasion of the Spring 2017 *còmhraidh* were invited to bring a visual representation of some feature of Argyll. Items presented included pictures, photographs, Celtic crosses, a cloth banner, an engraved slate. Seated in a circle around the item in view, all were invited to indicate what they could see in it before the person who brought it was invited to indicate what it meant to them. This provoked a rich and engaging discussion, revealing how the landscape of the west coast can stimulate the vision of faith. Important recurrent themes included the capacity of works of art to carry layers of meaning rather than narrowing down a single definition; and the possibility of symbolism having both personal and public dimensions.

Lucy Gray, a Taynuilt-based sculptor, brought some of her pieces – "Words from my Mouth," "Weeping from the Bone" and "Three Prayers".⁸ All her work is informed by her faith but she avoids labelling it with

⁸ See further www.scottish-gallery.co.uk/lucygray [2 May 2017].

traditional Christian language, which unfortunately is off-putting for many people in the present climate. However, she sees the vision of faith as being hidden within her work – and there to be discovered. Rather as C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* can be enjoyed simply as a work of fiction yet carries within it profound Christian meaning,⁹ Lucy intends her work to stand on its artistic merit yet to offer deep meaning in terms of faith for those who can discover it.

Lucy's work is very much shaped by her own spiritual pilgrimage, which led to her discovering her vocation as a sculptor. She aims to create work that is "not pretty but beautiful" – it "hits you in the guts". Rather than simply being representational, she aims to capture feeling – e.g. not drawing a stone but drawing "what it feels like" to hold the stone. A persistent theme in Lucy's work is that beauty comes through suffering – e.g. "How Pearls are Made". Lucy draws on her Argyll location for inspiration in her work. She sees the Argyll context as quiet, still, loving and accepting. It is also a context that is barren spiritually at the present time. Since it is barren it is also thirsty – so spiritual refreshment is welcome.

Discussion focussed on the extent to which "anonymous Christianity" could be expressed through art. It was also noted that we are living in a highly visual age and it may be time for the church to embrace the arts more fully. For example, church buildings could feature works of art that would promote meditation by anyone choosing to spend time in the church.

The Conversation Continues

The *còmhradh* has never attracted large numbers. Half a dozen people are ever-present, another dozen are semi-regular and a wider circle of around fifty have participated now and again. The initiative has developed sufficient intimacy to fulfil its conversational purpose. The sharing of meals, coffee breaks and strolls in the extensive Glencruitten grounds foster an atmosphere in which the discussions outlined above can take place in an engaging way. A minority of participants are formally trained in theology but all have thought deeply about matters of faith and bring

⁹ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950.

a great variety of professional discipline and life experience to the conversation. As a result, it offers the "dynamic interaction among gospel, church and culture" that Robert Schreiter offered as his definition of "local theology".¹⁰

The five years of the *còmhradh* have vindicated its original inspiration that it is time to be talking of the meaning of faith. The plates are shifting and the gulf is widening between inherited expressions of faith and contemporary life. In seeking to bridge that gulf, the *còmhradh* has been based on the principle of "dig where you are" – mining Argyll's history and contemporary life in search of insight and illumination. Yet it has not been parochial. Seamus Heaney found that the poet must inhabit both the parish and the universe. The experience of the *còmhradh* suggests that so must the theologian. Digging down into the life and experience of Argyll, far from narrowing the scope of the discussion, has opened it up to universal concerns and issues. This brief account of its conversations is therefore offered in the hope that these may suggest points of engagement that will prove relevant elsewhere. Much of what is outlined above is tentative and provisional yet it is clear that this is a conversation that needs to take place.

Acknowledgements

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¹⁰ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985, p. 22.

25. Brexit, Trump and Christ's Call to Discipleship

In March 2018 the World Council of Churches convened a World Mission Conference, at Arusha in Tanzania, to address the theme: "Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship".¹ The verbs in the title give an important clue as to its meaning. It suggests an understanding of faith that is dynamic and relevant, provoking challenge and engendering change. The first disciples of Jesus were inwardly transformed themselves and thus became agents of change in their generation. This two-fold transformation was evoked by the Conference as a call to faith and action in today's world. This chapter seeks to sketch salient aspects of the contemporary global context that invite such transformative engagement.

Such an exercise is required since the Conference will take place amidst rapid change in the values that govern social and political life. The "Overton window" is a term used in political science to indicate the acceptable range of beliefs and values in a culture at any particular time.² The second decade of the 21st century has witnessed rapid change in the Overton window. Ideas that had long been considered "beyond the pale" have steadily established themselves as having a place within the "window". These might start off as new and shocking lines of thought but, with constant and careful restatement, they can become mainstream. Take the question of torture, for example. Since the Geneva Conventions were adopted by almost all states after the Second World War it was accepted that no one would openly advocate the use of torture. This changed when Donald Trump used his first TV interview as President to say he believes torture "absolutely" works and that the US should "fight fire with fire."³ What was once unthinkable has been moving to the mainstream. When the WCC prepared its 2012 mission affirmation *Together Towards Life*, it presciently gave it the subtitle "Mission and Evan-

¹ See *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 105/2 (Nov. 2016), pp. 336-41.

² See John Lanchester, "Brexit Blues," *London Review of Books*, Vol. 38 No. 15 (28 July 2016), pp. 3-6 [3].

³ Matthew Weaver and Spencer Ackerman, "Trump claims torture works but experts warn of its 'potentially existential' costs," *The Guardian*, 26.1.2017.

gelism in *Changing Landscapes*".⁴ With the Overton window in overdrive, the landscapes have been changing dramatically. Familiar landmarks have been disappearing and there are new and unfamiliar features to be navigated.

The Arusha World Mission Conference stands in a succession of approximately decennial conferences that have been held since the epoch-making gathering held in Edinburgh in 1910. A key feature of these World Mission Conferences has been their attempt to take account of the changing landscapes of the world around them and to advance new conceptions of mission to meet each new situation.⁵ Such an exercise is not without its risks. There have been times when this ecumenical endeavour to relate mission to the contemporary context has provoked fears that its advocates are so absorbed in the context that they have lost touch with the preaching of the gospel and the life of the church. A great virtue of the vision expressed in *Together Towards Life* is that it stands firmly in the ecumenical tradition of contextual engagement while placing this in a theological and missiological framework that clarifies its spiritual, ecclesial and evangelical character. Beginning with the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of all life and understanding mission as the action of the Holy Spirit who is the Giver of life, *TTL* engages our contemporary context from the perspective of a profound theological commitment. It is not coincidental that the first World Mission Conference to be convened since the publication of *Together Towards Life* revolved around the question of discipleship. For this historic text provokes the question of what it means to "walk in the Spirit," following Christ in a way that brings transformation to our world. Assessing current social and political developments is one way to discern where transformation is called for.

Populist Politics and Christian Obedience

It is apparent that a wave of populism is shaping the contemporary global political environment. As Jan-Werner Müller explains, "Populists al-

⁴ Jooseop Keum ed., *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, Geneva: WCC, 2012.

⁵ See Ross et al., *Ecumenical Missiology*, pp. 6-146.

ways claim that they – and they alone – properly represent the people. This perhaps initially innocuous-sounding rhetoric has two pernicious consequences. First, all other political contenders are condemned by populists as being part of a self-serving, corrupt elite. Second, citizens who do not support the populists will have their status as proper members of the people put into doubt."⁶ Populism thus entails a dismissive and condemnatory attitude towards other political parties or movements and a tendency to close down the space available to citizens who wish to advocate alternative views. Complex issues are reduced to a binary choice between good and evil and anything less than unquestioning support for the populist leaders is portrayed as morally degenerate. This is well illustrated by the political environment in the UK following the vote to leave the European Union ("Brexit"). Riding a wave of populist fervour, the right-wing Tory Government immediately questioned the integrity of anyone who challenged its determination to drive through a "hard" Brexit.

Populist movements also nurse grievances and promote exclusionary nationalist politics. The movement propelling Donald Trump to the American Presidency provides a good example of this. In his inauguration speech, he declared: "From this day forward, it's going to be only America first, America first. Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families. We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength.... We will follow two simple rules: buy American and hire American".⁷ An *Observer* editorial commented on the speech, noting that its crass nationalism, "... appeals to the darker side of human nature, bolstering the insidious claims of jealousy, envy, greed and hubris. It thrives on fear, chauvinism, discrimination and not always subliminal notions of ethnic, racial and

⁶ Jan-Werner Müller, "In the Name of the People," *Amnesty* 192 (Spring 2017), 14-15, at 14. See further Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

⁷ "The full text of Donald Trump's inauguration speech," *The Guardian*, 20 January 2017.

moral superiority. It is a product of our times. But it is not too much to say Trump's ranting scream of 'America first, America first!' carries an echo of the 'Sieg Heil' (hail victory) of another, not-forgotten era of brutish nationalist triumphalism."⁸

So far-reaching are the claims being made that they present a challenge to people of faith. The International Fellowship of Mission as Transformation has indicated what is at stake for Christian discipleship:

A new form of dangerous political leadership is emerging in different parts of the world. Although this is not the first, and likely not the last time, the threat today of what can be called the new fascism is real. As an ideology characterized by fundamentalist, militant, nationalistic, and racist policies, fascism threatens especially the "other," be it the poor, the oppressed, or the disenfranchised—people for whom God has a special concern....

Though we witness this form of dangerous political leadership emerging in other parts of the world, we are issuing this statement around the inauguration of Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States, because of that nation's global influence. We are keenly aware of the anxiety and fear being caused around the world by the actions, stated positions, and inflammatory foreign policy remarks of the President-elect.

As representative members of the global evangelical community, we stand with all who oppose violence, racism, misogyny, and religious, sexual and political discrimination by resisting the leadership of a person whose life, deeds and words have normalized and even glorified these postures. Our voices represent solidarity with them both in their grief over the results of the elections and in their resolve to speak to power in word and deed in these troubling times.

As a challenge to the new fascism, we call the whole church to biblical faithfulness in:

the merciful and just treatment of immigrants, refugees, strangers, and racial and religious minorities;

⁸ Observer Editorial, *The Observer*, 22 January 2017.

- the rejection of all sorts of objectification of women and commercialization of sex;
- the responsible and just regard for the care of God's creation, including taking seriously the reality and dangers of climate change;
- the commitment to world peace in the face of the war industry, military rhetoric and action;
- the courageous and self-sacrificing pursuit of the welfare of the poor, marginalized, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, including children and youth.⁹

The far-reaching authority claims of populist leaders raise questions of Christian obedience. When the values of the Gospel stand in sharp contrast to the prevailing political mainstream, questions of Lordship come to the centre of attention. Trump's cry of "America first! America first!" opens up the question of idolatry – whether a country is being accorded the place that belongs to God alone. Fellow populist leaders, such as Putin, Erdogan, Modi and Duterte, provoke the same question. In this context it can be costly to follow Christ and to expose the false gods that claim allegiance. Metropolitan Mor Geevarghese Coorilos has suggested what this might involve:

There are 'new King Herods', a new imperial age and numerous 'little empires' being formed in the orbit of the 'mega-empire' and working in hegemonic ways. In India, for example, an unholy alliance of religious fundamentalism, caste mentality and the ideology of neo-liberalism is creating a fascist empire. Division, fundamentalism, violence and discrimination are all on the increase.

In a context of neo-imperialism what does it mean to move in the Spirit and be transforming disciples? As in the 1st century, it means resisting hegemonic exercise of power – super-powers, casteism, racism, sexism, mammon, patriarchy, fundamentalism etc. Mission as martyrdom is very much alive today in such contexts as India, Syria, Egypt and

⁹ "A Call for Biblical Faithfulness Amid the New Fascism," News Update, International Fellowship of Mission as Transformation, 20 January 2017, <http://infemit.org/call-biblical-faithfulness/> [23 January 2017].

Nigeria. It is time for costly discipleship, transformative discipleship – which needs to be exercised in all spheres of life.¹⁰

Being disciples will mean countering the all-consuming claims of populist politics with the confession that Jesus is Lord. To do so is likely to be costly.

Post-Truth, Fake News and Alternative Facts

A further dimension of the global political environment that needs to be in focus when we consider Christ's call to discipleship is the question of how information is conveyed and how perceptions are formed in contemporary society. In short, it means facing Pontius Pilate's question, "what is truth?"¹¹ It is surely not accidental that the Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year for 2016 was "post-truth".¹² During that year it became a common explanation of what was taking place that we were living in a "post-truth era," in particular an era of post-truth politics. At first sight this is a curious word to add to our language. Truth, surely, is always going to exist – how could we be in an era where truth has been left behind? Of course, there will always be objective criteria available to distinguish true from false. But the point about "post-truth" is that it describes a state of affairs where it does not matter whether or not something is objectively true. The veracity of a statement is unimportant or irrelevant. If it appeals to emotion and affirms a given perception, then the statement has had its intended effect.

There can be little doubt that the reason "post-truth" became the word of the year for the Oxford Dictionaries in 2016 is because of the nature of the campaign in the UK's referendum on membership of the European Union. In earlier times, if a politician were found to have stated something that was demonstrably false, their credibility would collapse and

¹⁰ Metropolitan Dr Mor Geevarghese Coorilos, Moderator's Address, World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Commission Meeting at General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 12-17 January 2017.

¹¹ John 18:38.

¹² English Oxford Living Dictionaries, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016> [8 March 2017].

their cause would be lost. In a post-truth situation a politician can carry on repeating a claim, even when it has been shown to be untrue by convincing independent analysis. Perhaps the most famous illustration of this was the claim by the Vote Leave campaign that EU membership cost the UK £350 million each week. Despite convincing analysis from a whole range of authorities showing that this was an inaccurate and misleading figure, the Vote Leave campaign continued to use it as a centerpiece of their campaign until the very day of the referendum, after which everyone agreed that it had not been an accurate or realistic figure. As the journalist John Lanchester observed: "I don't think there has ever been a time in British politics when so many people in public life spent so much time loudly declaring things they knew not to be true."¹³ The point, however, is that whereas once it would have been fatal to one's political prospects to be found to be deliberately lying, in a post-truth era it is possible for politicians who have achieved their ends through being untruthful to be rewarded and to flourish. The referendum on EU membership demonstrated that the prevailing political culture has changed. Much less importance is attached to the issue of whether or not a claim is factually true.

If there were need for any further confirmation that this is the direction of travel it came with the Presidential campaign of Donald Trump and the early days of his Presidency. Through the recent American experience, we have been given another new term – "fake news". This is language that has frequently been used by President Trump himself in his battle with the media, which he believes is unfairly critical of his policies and his Presidency. CNN and the New York Times are regular targets of his wrath and he often dismisses them as pedlars of "fake news".¹⁴ This is a term that has arisen especially in the context of social media and, taken to its extreme, can involve announcing as news something that has not occurred at all, something entirely fictional and imaginary. The insidious

¹³ John Lanchester, "Brexit Blues," *London Review of Books*, Vol. 38 No. 15 (28 July 2016), pp. 3-6 [6].

¹⁴ See James Carson, "What is Fake News? Its Origins and How It Grew under Donald Trump," *The Telegraph*, 24 February 2017, www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/0/fake-news-origins-grew-2016/ [8 March 2017].

aspect of this is that such fiction can be used to shape perceptions, thereby becoming a potent political weapon.

It would be all very well for President Trump to criticize purveyors of "fake news" if he himself were scrupulous about truthfulness. Unfortunately, according to the respected scrutineers Politifact, 69% of major fact-checked claims by Trump were classed as either mostly false, false or 'pants on fire' [a colloquialism they use for outright lies] ... Only 16 per cent of Trump's statements were either true or mostly true."¹⁵

Almost as soon as President Trump assumed office a controversy broke out about the numbers of people who had attended his inauguration. It was apparent to anyone watching on TV that the crowds were rather thin, compared to those who had attended Barack Obama's inauguration eight years earlier. Nonetheless in his first press conference Trump's press secretary Stephen Spicer claimed that the crowds at Trump's inauguration had been the biggest ever – a demonstrably false claim. When the media challenged the claim, Trump's spokesperson Kellyanne Conway explained that Spicer had not been stating falsehoods but rather "alternative facts" – another new term to add to our vocabulary.¹⁶

At one level this might be laughable. But there is a serious side to it. As the commentator Andrew Sullivan has observed about demonstrably false statements issued by the Trump administration: "They are direct refutations of reality and their propagation and repetition is about enforcing his power rather than wriggling out of a political conundrum. They are attacks on the very possibility of a reasoned discourse, the kind of bald-faced lies that authoritarians issue as a way to test loyalty and

¹⁵ This rolling analysis covered 370 of the most newsworthy and significant pronouncements over a year-and-a-half of speeches and statements the US President made on the campaign trail and after he entered the White House. See Martin Williams, "President Pants on Fire ... two thirds of Trump claims are lies," *Sunday Herald*, 26 February 2017; see further www.politifact.com/truth-ometer/rulings/pants-fire/ [1 March 2017].

¹⁶ "Trump team in fresh war of words with US media," BBC News, 22 January 2017, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-38712182 [4 March 2017].

force their subjects into submission."¹⁷ Bernie Sanders (admittedly a political rival) offers a similar analysis: "These are very scary times for the people of the United States, and ... for the whole world. We have a president who is a pathological liar. Trump lies all of the time." Furthermore, Sanders believes the lying is not accidental: "He lies in order to undermine the foundations of American democracy ... What he wants is to end up as leader of a nation that has moved a significant degree towards authoritarianism; where the president of the United States has extraordinary powers, far more than our constitution has provided for."¹⁸

No wonder that another word that has been trending is "Orwellian," referring to George Orwell and particularly his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that traces the emergence of an authoritarian "big brother" kind of society.¹⁹ Orwell's point was that a key element in the construction of an authoritarian society is manipulation of language and use of propaganda so that what is false comes to be accepted as true and the entire perception of the society is reconstructed so as to serve the interests of those in power.

The loss of high standards of truthfulness in political life thus becomes a tool in the hands of authoritarian, populist leaders. Truth and power, however, are not only political issues but also religious. As regards truth, the Christian vision offers a perception of reality that arises from obedience to Christ. In the post-Enlightenment Western world the challenge to Christian discipleship has been how to express that vision of faith in a context where great authority was accorded to human reason. That authority is now being diminished as we enter a post-truth era. The Christian vision now has to be advanced in a context where the raw assertion of power by authoritarian regimes creates a climate that is in many ways

¹⁷ Andrew Sullivan, "The Madness of King Donald," *New York Magazine*, 10 February 2017, <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/02/andrew-sullivan-the-madness-of-king-donald.html> [8 March 2017].

¹⁸ Ed Pilkington, "Bernie Sanders on Trump and the Resistance: 'Despair is not an option,'" *The Guardian*, 10 March 2017, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/mar/10/bernie-sanders-interview-trump-democratic-party-resistance [11 March 2017].

¹⁹ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1949.

antithetical to biblical faith. Power as domination and control stands in contrast to power as love and service. As the Common Call of Edinburgh 2010 stated: "Disturbed by asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and accountable use of power structures."²⁰ The hermeneutic of suspicion in regard to the exercise of power that is built into the Christian tradition may be crucial to faithful witness in our time. In particular, to heed the biblical teaching to "let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no"²¹ will mean taking the path of costly discipleship.

A Great, Great Wall: the New Age of Xenophobia and Racism

A key plank in Donald Trump's Presidential campaign was his pledge to build a "great, great wall" on the Mexican-American border. He justified his plan by alleging that, "[Mexico] are sending people that have lots of problems, and they are bringing those problems to us. They are bringing drugs, and bringing crime, and their rapists."²² The new President referred to border protection three times during his short inauguration speech, stating that, "We've defended other nation's borders while refusing to defend our own." This flies in the face of the fact that the Obama administration deported more undocumented immigrants than any before it and took serious steps to secure America's southern border.²³ It is clear that a nation largely composed of immigrants will now take a hostile view of future aspiring immigrants, even those seeking asylum from violence and insecurity in their countries of origin.

Trump also called for all Muslims to be banned from entering the USA, seeking a "total and complete shut-down" of the country's borders to

²⁰ Edinburgh 2010 Common Call §4, in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson eds., *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow*, Oxford: Regnum, 2011, 1; cit *Together Towards Life* §33.

²¹ James 5:12.

²² Adam Gabbatt, "Donald Trump's tirade on Mexico's 'drugs and rapists' outrages US Latinos," *The Guardian*, 16 June 2015.

²³ Dominic Rushe et al., "What you need to know about Trump's first speech as president," *The Guardian*, 20 January 2017.

Muslims. This measure was needed, he argued, because, "Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life."²⁴

Trump is also known for misogyny, famously claiming in a recorded conversation that when you are famous, "you can do anything" and that when he meets beautiful women he feels able to "grab them by the pussy."²⁵ It was therefore unsurprising that his inauguration provoked an unprecedented "Women's March on Washington" the following day, which was joined by an estimated 500,000 women while "sister" marches were held in more than 600 other locations around the world.

Meanwhile in the UK in July 2016, the month after the vote for Brexit, there were 5,468 "hate crimes," an increase of 41% from the previous year.²⁶ As John Lanchester observed: "There is a real darkness in this country, a xenophobic, racist sickness of heart that is closer to the surface today than it has been for decades. That is a direct result of the referendum campaign. The campaign's dual legacy is the end of the idea that politics is based on rational argument, and a new permission to hate immigrants."²⁷ Surveying the year 2016 it is hardly surprising that *Guardian* columnist Gary Younge concluded: "This [2016] was a year in which vulgarity, divisiveness and exclusion won – a triumph for dystopian visions of race, nation and ethnicity. Those thought dangerous and marginal are now not only mainstream, they have power. Immigrants and minorities are fearful, bigots are emboldened, discourse is coarsened."²⁸

²⁴ Ed Pilkington, "Donald Trump: ban all Muslims entering US," *The Guardian*, 8 December 2015.

²⁵ Ben Jacobs, Sabrina Siddiqui and Scott Bixby, "'You can do anything': Trump brags on tape about using fame to get women," *The Guardian*, 8 October 2016.

²⁶ Matthew Weaver, "Hate crimes soared after EU referendum, Home Office figures confirm," *The Guardian*, 13 October 2016.

²⁷ John Lanchester, "Brexit Blues," *London Review of Books*, Vol. 38 No. 15 (28 July 2016), pp. 3-6[8]..

²⁸ Gary Younge, "The right is emboldened, yes. But it's not in the ascendancy," *The Guardian*, 30 December 2016.

Achille Mbembe for his part suggests that, "With the triumph of this neo-Darwinian approach to history-making, apartheid under various guises will be restored as the new old norm. Its restoration will pave the way to new separatist impulses, the erection of more walls, the militarisation of more borders, deadly forms of policing, more asymmetrical wars, splitting alliances and countless internal divisions including in established democracies."²⁹

This direction of travel stands clearly in contrast to the view of others, strangers and immigrants that meets us in the Bible. Thirty-six times in the Old Testament alone, God's people are commanded to care for the foreigner and the stranger in their land. Jesus commanded his disciples: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."³⁰ At a time when prejudice, hatred, racism, misogyny and xenophobia are returning the mainstream and being validated by those in power, the onus is on disciples of Christ to show that they look on "others" in a very different way.

Mark Labberton and Richard Mouw of Fuller Theological Seminary felt obliged, in the aftermath of the American election, to disassociate themselves from the identification of Evangelical Christians with hostile attitudes towards "women, people of color, Muslims, and LGBT persons," stating:

We lament and reject the disgrace that hateful words and actions by some evangelicals have heaped specifically upon people of color, immigrants, women, Muslims, and LGBT persons in our nation, as we uphold the dignity of all persons made in the image of God. We grieve and condemn the racism and fear, rejection and hatred that have been expressed and associated with our Lord. Such realities do not in any way reflect the fruit of God's Spirit and instead evoke the sorrow of God's heart and of our own ... *Evangelical* has value only if it names our commitment to seek and to demonstrate the heart and mind of God in Jesus Christ. This calls us into deeper faith and greater humility.

²⁹ Achille Mbembe, "The Age of Humanism is Ending," *Mail and Guardian*, 22 December 2016. <http://mg.co.za/article/2016-12-22-00-the-age-of-humanism-is-ending> [28 December 2016].

³⁰ Matthew 5:44.

It also leads us to repudiate and resist all forces of racism, misogyny, and all other attitudes and actions, overt and implied, that subvert the dignity of persons made in the image of God. The only evangelicalism worthy of its name must be one that both faithfully points to and mirrors Jesus Christ, the good news for the world, and seeks justice that reflects the character of God's kingdom.³¹

True Christian faith, far from being a rallying point for hostility towards "others," fosters a radical openness. The new centre found in Jesus Christ, writes Miroslav Volf, "opens the self up, makes it capable and willing to give itself for others and to receive others in itself."³² As nations and peoples are discipled, they express themselves in the kind of self-giving love in which Christ found his identity and purpose and in which our world may find true hope today. The way of Christ tells us, writes Alan Lewis, that "trust, defencelessness, and vulnerability are in themselves, despite all appearances, finally more productive and protective than all stratagems for aggression or defence, attack or retaliation, self-assertion or self-protection." Following Christ means being willing "to lead risky, unprotected, costly lives, open to others and committed to self-expenditure on their behalf."³³ Martin Robra has offered a timely reminder of lessons learned from the World Council of Churches "Theology of Life" programme from 1994 to 1998: "Only if they begin to build together a new web of relationships that sustains and nurtures life through common practices of solidarity can people start to engage each other, address the differences between them, and make themselves vulnerable and accessible to others."³⁴

³¹ "Post-Election Evangelical: A Statement from Mark Labberton and Richard Mouw," Fuller Theological Seminary, 14 November 2016, <http://fuller.edu/communication/post-election-evangelical-a-statement-from-mark-labberton-and-richard-mouw/> [15 January 2017].

³² Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996, p. 71.

³³ Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, pp. 321, 454.

³⁴ Martin Robra, "Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship," *International Review of Mission* 105/2 (2016), 243-56 [251].

A particularly challenging area for such discipleship is that of relations with people of other faiths. With religion as one of the key identity markers in a divided world, will Christians retreat into the comfort and familiarity of their own faith community or will they find ways to bridge gulfs, dispel misunderstanding and achieve reconciliation? This need not involve compromising fundamental convictions or diluting the content of one's faith. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer presciently commented: "In the modern world it seems so difficult to walk with absolute certainty in the narrow way of ecclesiastical decision and yet remain in the broad open spaces of the universal love of Christ, of the patience, mercy and 'philanthropy' of God (Titus 3.4) for the weak and ungodly. Yet somehow or other we must combine the two, or else we shall follow the paths of men."³⁵ His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu have recently demonstrated what is possible by letting down their defences, enjoying their common humanity and sharing the riches of their respective faith traditions.³⁶ Following Christ entails such vulnerability and openness to others. Our common future as a human community may depend upon it.

Inequality and Justice

Another question on which the future hangs is the distribution of resources in the global economy. In a report issued on the occasion of the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, in January 2017, Oxfam pointed out that the world's eight richest individuals have as much wealth as the 3.6bn people who make up the poorest half of the world, that since 2015, the richest 1% has owned more wealth than the rest of the planet, and that over the last 30 years the growth in the incomes of the bottom 50% has been zero, whereas incomes of the top 1% have grown 300%.³⁷ The report concluded that: "As growth benefits the richest, the rest of society – especially the poorest – suffers. The very design

³⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 2nd ed., New York: Macmillan, 1959, p. 41.

³⁶ His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams, *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*, London: Hutchinson, 2016.

³⁷ See *An Economy for the 99%*, Oxfam Briefing Paper, January 2017.

of our economies and the principles of our economics have taken us to this extreme, unsustainable and unjust point. Our economy must stop excessively rewarding those at the top and start working for all people."³⁸

Stephen Hawking, widely acknowledged to be the greatest physicist of our time, shortly before his death offered his view that we are living at "the most dangerous time in the development of humanity". "We face," he says, "awesome environmental challenges: climate change, food production, overpopulation, the decimation of other species, epidemic disease, acidification of the oceans."³⁹ Hawking is particularly concerned about the extent of the inequality that is prevailing in our globalized world. He points out that,

...the lives of the richest people in the most prosperous parts of the world are agonisingly visible to anyone, however poor, who has access to a phone. And since there are now more people with a telephone than access to clean water in sub-Saharan Africa, this will shortly mean nearly everyone on our increasingly crowded planet will not be able to escape the inequality. The consequences of this are plain to see: the rural poor flock to cities, to shanty towns, driven by hope. And then often, finding that the Instagram nirvana is not available there, they seek it overseas, joining the ever greater numbers of economic migrants in search of a better life. These migrants in turn place new demands on the infrastructures and economies of the countries in which they arrive, undermining tolerance and further fuelling political populism.⁴⁰

We cannot underestimate the extent to which deeply entrenched economic inequalities drive the destructive social and political trends identified above. As Pankaj Mishra has argued: "An existential resentment of other people's being, caused by an intense mix of envy and sense of humiliation and powerlessness, *ressentiment*, as it lingers and deepens, poisons civil society and undermines political liberty, and is presently

³⁸ *An Economy for the 99%*, 1.

³⁹ Stephen Hawking, "This is the most dangerous time for our planet," *The Guardian*, 1 December 2016, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/01/stephen-hawking-dangerous-time-planet-inequality [22 March 2017].

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

making for a global turn to authoritarianism and toxic forms of chauvinism."⁴¹ These in turn find their counterpoint in militancy and terrorism with a vicious circle developing as the two monsters feed one another.

The need for Christians to engage critically and prophetically with poverty and inequality is a point of convergence in the mission statements produced by global Christian bodies in the 2010-13 period. The Lausanne Movement's Cape Town Commitment challenges Christians to show love towards the poor and explains that, "*Such love for the poor* demands that we not only love mercy and deeds of compassion, but also that we do justice through exposing and opposing all that oppresses and exploits the poor."⁴² The WCC's *Together Towards Life* suggests that, "The policy of unlimited growth through the domination of the global free market is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature."⁴³ It cites the critique of the unfettered free market offered by the 2004 Accra Confession of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches: "It makes the false promise that it can save the world through creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry."⁴⁴

Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* raises the same concern: "While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation."⁴⁵ The Pope demon-

⁴¹ Pankaj Mishra, *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*, London: Allen Lane, 2017, p. 14.

⁴² *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (Lausanne Movement, 2011), at: www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment, §I 7

⁴³ *Together Towards Life* §31.

⁴⁴ World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *The Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice: in the Economy and the Earth*, Geneva: WARC, 2004, §10; cit. *Together Towards Life* §31.

⁴⁵ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, 24 November 2013 (Vatican Press), at: <http://w2.vatican.va/>

strates the gospel perspective that arise from being closely identified with the poor: "In this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting."⁴⁶

The reason they are still waiting is explained by Achille Mbembe in these terms: "The main clash of the first half of the 21st century will not oppose religions or civilisations. It will oppose liberal democracy and neo-liberal capitalism, the rule of finance and the rule of the people, humanism and nihilism. The widening bifurcation of democracy and capital is the new threat to civilisation. Abetted by technological and military might, finance capital has achieved its hegemony over the world by annexing the core of human desires and, in the process, by turning itself into the first global secular theology." To be disciples in face of such a force of history will involve occupying an exposed, risky and costly position. As *TTL* trenchantly observes: "This is a global system of mammon that protects the unlimited growth of wealth of only the rich and powerful through endless exploitation. This tower of greed is threatening the whole household of God. The reign of God is in direct opposition to the empire of mammon."⁴⁷ To be a disciple of Christ today involves a critical stance in relation to the exclusionary dynamics of the global economy.

The Earth at Stake

In the crisis of our time it is not only the future of humanity that is at stake but the future of the earth itself. The international agreement on action to tackle climate change, achieved at the UN summit in Paris in December 2015, signalled a moment of hope in regard to the gravest threat facing the human community and the earth itself in our time.

[content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf](https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf) §56

⁴⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* §54.

⁴⁷ *Together Towards Life* §31.

However, the rise of such movements as Donald Trump's campaign for the American Presidency has dashed such hopes. Trump was openly sceptical about the scientific consensus on the causes of climate change and eager to promote businesses that depend on the exploitation of fossil fuels. On Trump's first day in office the White House website's expansive section on climate change was deleted and replaced by an "American energy first plan" in which Trump promised to scrap the "harmful and unnecessary" climate action plan.⁴⁸

Trump's choice of Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency is telling. Pruitt has stated that, "Scientists continue to disagree and extent of global warming and its connections to actions of mankind." As Oklahoma attorney general Pruitt has been a raucous supporter of fossil fuel companies and has on many occasions sought to hobble the public health regulations of the EPA for which he will now be responsible. It therefore caused little surprise when he declared that, "The American people are tired of seeing billions of dollars drained from our economy due to unnecessary EPA regulations, and I intend to run this agency in a way that fosters both responsible protection for the environment and freedom for American businesses."⁴⁹

These moves by the Trump administration are part of a global trend. Governments that signed up to the Paris agreement on climate change are now pushing for more fracking and more tar sands developments, which are utterly incompatible with 2 degrees, let alone 1.5 degrees. Why is such apparently self-destructive action taking place? Naomi Klein suggests that: "This is happening because the wealthiest countries in the world think they are going to be OK, that someone else is going to eat the biggest risks, that even when climate change turns up on their doorstep, they will be taken care of."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Dominic Rushe et al., "What you need to know about Trump's first speech as president," *The Guardian*, 20 January 2017.

⁴⁹ Ibid..

⁵⁰ Naomi Klein, "Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World," *London Review of Books* Vol. 38 No. 11 (2 June 2016), pp. 11-14 [14].

The climate crisis cannot be understood simply as a scientific or technocratic issue that can be addressed in isolation from its wider social and economic context. As Klein has written:

A culture that places so little value on black and brown lives that it is willing to let human beings disappear beneath the waves, or set themselves on fire in detention centres, will also be willing to let the countries where black and brown people live disappear beneath the waves or desiccate in the arid heat. When that happens, theories of human hierarchy – that we must take care of our own first – will be marshalled to rationalise these monstrous decisions.... We are making this rationalisation already, if only implicitly. Although climate change will ultimately be an existential threat to all of humanity, in the short term we know that it does discriminate, hitting the poor first and worst, whether they are abandoned on the rooftops of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina or whether they are among the 36 million who according to the UN are facing hunger due to drought in Southern and Eastern Africa.⁵¹

There is need to reckon with the hard reality that, "... climate change isn't just about things getting hotter and wetter: under our current economic and political model, it's about things getting meaner and uglier".⁵²

Christian discipleship in today's context calls for a vision of faith that embraces the earth itself. As the *Cape Town Commitment* states: "If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says 'Jesus is Lord' is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ. *Such love for God's creation* demands that we repent of our part in the destruction, waste and pollution of the earth's resources and our collusion in the toxic idolatry of consumerism. Instead, we commit ourselves to urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility."⁵³ *Together Towards Life* is also outspoken on this point: "Con-

⁵¹ Naomi Klein, "Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World," *London Review of Books* Vol. 38 No. 11 (2 June 2016), pp. 11-14 [14].

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵³ *Cape Town Commitment* §1 7.

sumerism triggers not limitless growth but rather endless exploitation of the earth's resources. Human greed is contributing to global warming and other forms of climate change. If this trend continues and earth is fatally damaged, what can we imagine salvation to be? Humanity cannot be saved alone while the rest of the created world perishes. Eco-justice cannot be separated from salvation, and salvation cannot come without a new humility that respects the needs of all life on earth."⁵⁴ The stakes could hardly be higher. As Yoon-Jae Chang has stated, "Today the world is standing at a crossroads, a point in time when we must either choose a society of self-destruction or a sustainable society of mutually enhancing life."⁵⁵ To be a disciple of Christ is to be involved in taking that choice.

Being Disciples Today

It is evident that the prevailing values of today's world are, in many respects, antithetical to the values of the gospel of Christ. Those who follow Christ therefore need to be prepared to swim against the tide and to voice a prophetic critique. They are not likely to win any popularity contests. It will be a costly discipleship. To set this discipleship in its proper context, however, it is important to remember that Christian discipleship is not primarily about adopting a political position, protesting against injustice or advocating certain ethical standpoints – even if it may in due course lead to such commitments. Nor is discipleship primarily a matter of adopting a belief structure or becoming a member of an institution – even if such developments may in due course be entailed. Christian discipleship is first of all personal – a matter of a transforming encounter with Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, in the power of the Spirit.

Rowan Williams begins his recent study of the Christian life by observing that, "Discipleship ... is a state of being. Discipleship is about how we live; not just the decisions we make, not just the things we believe, but a state of being."⁵⁶ *Together Towards Life* states the matter in spiritual terms:

⁵⁴ *Together Towards Life* §23.

⁵⁵ Yoon-Jae Chang, "Noah's Ark, Mt Meru and the God of the Rainbow," *International Review of Mission* Vol. 105/2 (2016), pp. 196-208 [207].

⁵⁶ Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life*, London: SPCK, 2016, p. 1.

"Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives."⁵⁷ The Cape Town Commitment concludes with the affirmation that: "Biblical mission demands that those who claim Christ's name should be like him, by taking up their cross, denying themselves, and following him in the paths of humility, love, integrity, generosity, and servanthood. To fail in discipleship and disciple-making, is to fail at the most basic level of our mission."⁵⁸ To be a disciple is, first and foremost, a personal matter. It is about an inward encounter with Christ, the formation of Christ-like character and the embarking on a way of life that corresponds with the path that Jesus followed.

This life cannot be lived in the abstract. It can, and must, be lived in the concrete reality of the world in which disciples are placed. In the words of Henri Nouwen: "[Jesus'] appearance in our midst has made it undeniably clear that changing the human heart and changing society are not separate tasks, but are as interconnected as the two beams of the cross."⁵⁹ As Pope Francis has urged, "... no one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society."⁶⁰ To be a disciple is to be engaged with such realities as the rise of populist politics, a post-truth age, the revival of racism and xenophobia, inequality and injustice in the global economy and threats to the integrity of the earth itself. Behind all of these forces are powerful vested interests that will not take kindly to being challenged. Discipleship is going to be costly.

Contemplating Jesus statement in the Beatitudes that, "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted,"⁶¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed that:

⁵⁷ *Together Towards Life* §3.

⁵⁸ *Cape Town Commitment*, Conclusion.

⁵⁹ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1994, p. 23.

⁶⁰ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* §183.

⁶¹ Matthew 5:4.

Nobody loves his fellow-humans better than a disciple, nobody understands his fellow-humans better than the Christian fellowship, and that very love impels them to stand aside and mourn. It was a happy and suggestive thought of Luther, to translate the Greek word here by the German *Leidtragen* (sorrow-bearing). For the emphasis lies on the *bearing* of sorrow. The disciple-community does not shake off sorrow as though it were no concern of its own, but willingly bears it. And in this way they show how close are the bonds that bind them to the rest of humanity.... Sorrow cannot tire them or wear them down, it cannot embitter them or cause them to break down under the strain; far from it, for they bear their sorrow in the strength of him who bears them up, who bore the whole suffering of the world upon the cross."⁶²

Here is where discipleship extends beyond the politics of protest or the energy of activist. Grounded in God's infinitely costly love for the world, it is equipped to give and keep on giving, to suffer and to keep on suffering, to persevere and to keep on persevering. Every disappointment, every false dawn, every reversal can be met with the hope and courage that disciples derives from their faith. They have counted the cost and are ready to carry their cross, come what may.

From this brief survey of current trends in our global context today it is apparent that disciples of Christ are on a collision course with powerful forces at work in the world. Their discipleship is going to be costly. Yet it may be that their minority view will hold the key to the future. As Martin Luther King Jr suggested a generation ago: "Our planet teeters on the brink of atomic annihilation; dangerous passions of pride, hatred, and selfishness are enthroned in our lives; truth lies prostrate on the rugged hills of nameless calvaries; and men do reverence before false gods of nationalism and materialism. The saving of our world from pending doom will come, not through the complacent adjustment of the conforming majority, but through the creative maladjustment of a nonconforming minority."⁶³

⁶² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, pp. 121-22.

⁶³ Martin Luther King Jr, "Transformed Non-conformist," www.transformingcenter.org/2016/01/transformed-nonconformist/ [2 March 2017].

It would be naïve to underestimate the cost that will be involved in following Jesus in a world driven by values so directly opposed to those found in the reign of God. Yet the last word belongs not with the risk or the pain that discipleship may entail. It was the theologian of costly discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who perhaps articulated most clearly the Christological reality that death leads to resurrection, that self-denial leads to fulfillment, that you lose your life in order to find it: "And if we answer the call to discipleship, where will it lead us? What decisions and partings will it demand? To answer this question, we shall have to go to him, for only he knows the answer. Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow him, knows the journey's end. But we do know that it will be a road of boundless mercy. Discipleship means joy."⁶⁴ It was surely a prophetic inspiration that prompted Pope Francis to title his encyclical "The Joy of the Gospel".⁶⁵ It is because the gospel brings joy that disciples of Christ experience transformation themselves and become agents of transformation in the world. In tracing some of the challenges presented by the global context to those taking the path of discipleship today, the cost involved in identifying with Jesus is plain to see. At the same time, and no less fundamentally, it is the source of infinite joy.

⁶⁴ Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 41.

⁶⁵ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*. One of the most prophetic and challenging statements of the encyclical is its suggestion that 'our technological society has succeeded in multiplying occasions of pleasure, yet has found it very difficult to engender joy' (§7).

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Kenneth R. Ross is a pastor, scholar and activist who has served as Professor of Theology at the University of Malawi and General Secretary of the Church of Scotland Board of World Mission. This book brings together his seminal essays on the meaning of Christian mission. Ranging widely but with particular focus on Scotland's missionary legacy, African Christianity and the future of the West, it invites readers to consider mission as God's spiral of renewal.

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